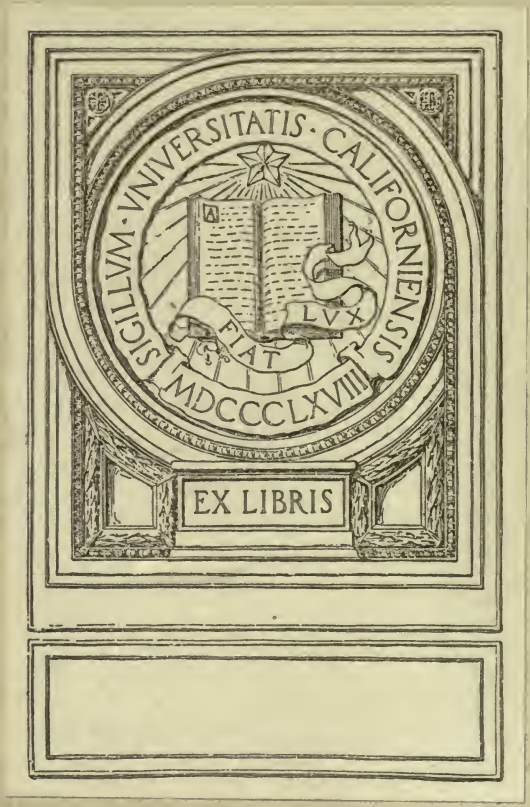
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ULSTER'S STAND FOR UNION

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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CALIFORNIA

THE RIGHT HON. SIR EDWARD CARSON, P.C.
(now Lord Carson of Duncairn).

UNIV. OF

ULSTER'S STAND FOR UNION

BY RONALD McNEILL

WITH FRONTISPIECE

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1922

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PREFACE

THE term "Ulster," except when the context proves the contrary, is used in this book not in the geographical, but the political meaning of the word, which is quite as well understood.

The aim of the book is to present an account of what I have occasionally in its pages referred to as "the Ulster Movement." The phrase is perhaps somewhat paradoxical when applied to a political ideal which was the maintenance of the *status quo*; but, on the other hand, the steps taken during a period of years to organise an effective opposition to interference with the established constitution in Ireland did involve a movement, and it is with these measures, rather than with the policy behind them, that the book is concerned.

Indeed, except for a brief introductory outline of the historical background of the Ulster standpoint, I have taken for granted, or only referred incidentally to the reasons for the unconquerable hostility of the Ulster Protestants to the idea of allowing the government of Ireland, and especially of themselves, to pass into the control of a Parliament in Dublin. Those reasons were many and substantial, based upon considerations both of a practical and a sentimental nature; but I have not attempted an exposition of them, having limited myself to a narrative of the events to which they gave rise.

Having been myself, during the most important part of the period reviewed, a member of the Standing Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council, and closely associated with the leaders of the movement, I have had personal knowledge of practically everything I have had to record. I have not, however, trusted to unaided memory for any

statement of fact. It is not, of course, a matter where anything that could be called research was required; but, in addition to the *Parliamentary Reports*, the *Annual Register*, and similar easily accessible books of reference, there was a considerable mass of private papers bearing on the subject, for the use of some of which I am indebted to friends.

I was permitted to consult the Minute-books of the Ulster Unionist Council and its Standing Committee, and also verbatim reports made for the Council of unpublished speeches delivered at private meetings of those bodies. A large collection of miscellaneous documents accumulated by the late Lord Londonderry was kindly lent to me by the present Marquis; and I also have to thank Lord Carson of Duncairn for the use of letters and other papers in his possession. Colonel F. H. Crawford, C.B.E., was good enough to place at my disposal a very detailed account written by himself of the voyage of the *Fanny*, and the log kept by Captain Agnew. My friend Mr. Thomas Moles, M.P., took full shorthand notes of the proceedings of the Irish Convention and the principal speeches made in it, and he kindly allowed me to use his transcript. And I should not like to pass over without acknowledgment the help given me on several occasions by Miss Omash, of the Union Defence League, in tracing references.

R. McN.

February 1922.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

ULSTER'S STAND FOR UNION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE ULSTER STANDPOINT

LIKE all other movements in human affairs, the opposition of the Northern Protestants of Ireland to the agitation of their Nationalist fellow-countrymen for Home Rule can only be properly understood by those who take some pains to get at the true motives, and to appreciate the spirit, of those who engaged in it. And as it is nowhere more true than in Ireland that the events of to-day are the outcome of events that occurred longer ago than yesterday, and that the motives of to-day have consequently their roots buried somewhat deeply in the past, it is no easy task for the outside observer to gain the insight requisite for understanding fairly the conduct of the persons concerned.

It was Mr. Asquith who very truly said that the Irish question, of which one of the principal factors is the opposition of Ulster to Home Rule, "springs from sources that are historic, economic, social, racial, and religious." It would be a hopeless undertaking to attempt here to probe to the bottom an origin so complex; but, whether the sympathies of the reader be for or against the standpoint of the Irish Loyalists, the actual events which make up what may be called the Ulster Movement would be wholly unintelligible without some introductory retrospect. Indeed, to those who set out to judge Irish political conditions without troubling themselves about anything more ancient than their own memory can recall, the most fundamental factor of all—the line of cleavage between Ulster and the rest of the island—is more than unintelligible. In the eyes of many it presents itself as an example of perversity, of "cussedness" on the part of men who

insist on magnifying mere differences of opinion, which would be easily composed by reasonable people, into obstacles to co-operation which have no reality behind them.

Writers and speakers on the Nationalist side deride the idea of "two nations" in Ireland, calling in evidence many obvious identities of interest, of sentiment, or of temperament between the inhabitants of the North and of the South. The Ulsterman no more denies these identities than the Greek, the Bulgar, and the Serb would deny that there are features common to all dwellers in the Balkan peninsula; but he is more deeply conscious of the difference than of the likeness between himself and the man from Munster or Connaught. His reply to those who denounced the Irish Government Act of 1920 on the ground that it set up a "partition of Ireland," is that the Act did not "set up," but only recognised, the partition which history made long ago, and which wrecked all attempts to solve the problem of Irish Government that neglected to take it into account. If there be any force in Renan's saying that the root of nationality is "the will to live together," the Nationalist cry of "Ireland a Nation" harmonises ill with the actual conditions of Ireland north and south of the Boyne. This dividing gulf between the two populations in Ireland is the result of the same causes as the political dissension that springs from it, as described by Mr. Asquith in words quoted above. The tendencies of social and racial origin operate for the most part subconsciously—though not perhaps less powerfully on that account; those connected with economic considerations, with religious creeds, and with events in political history enter directly and consciously into the formation of convictions which in turn become the motives for action.

In the mind of the average Ulster Unionist the particular point of contrast between himself and the Nationalist of which he is more forcibly conscious than of any other, and in which all other distinguishing traits are merged, is that he is loyal to the British Crown and the British Flag, whereas the other man is loyal to neither. Religious intolerance, so far as the Protestants are concerned, of

which so much is heard, is in actual fact mainly traceable to the same sentiment. It is unfortunately true that the lines of political and of religious division coincide; but religious dissensions seldom flare up except at times of political excitement; and, while it is undeniable that the temper of the creeds more resembles what prevailed in England in the seventeenth than in the twentieth century, yet when overt hostility breaks out it is because the creed is taken—and usually taken rightly—as *prima facie* evidence of political opinion—political opinion meaning "loyalty" or "disloyalty," as the case may be. The label of "loyalist" is that which the Ulsterman cherishes above all others. It means something definite to him; its special significance is reinforced by the consciousness of its wearers that they are a minority; it sustains the feeling that the division between parties is something deeper and more fundamental than anything that in England is called difference of opinion. This feeling accounts for much that sometimes perplexes even the sympathetic English observer, and moves the hostile partisan to scornful criticism. The ordinary Protestant farmer or artisan of Ulster is by nature as far as possible removed from the being who is derisively nicknamed the "noisy patriot" or the "flag-wagging jingo." If the National Anthem has become a "party tune" in Ireland, it is not because the loyalist sings it, but because the disloyalist shuns it; and its avoidance at gatherings both political and social where Nationalists predominate, naturally makes those who value loyalty the more punctilious in its use. If there is a profuse display of the Union Jack, it is because it is in Ulster not merely "bunting" for decorative purposes as in England, but the symbol of a cherished faith.

There may, perhaps, be some persons, unfamiliar with the Ulster cast of mind, who find it hard to reconcile this profession of passionate loyalty with the methods embarked upon in 1912 by the Ulster people. It is a question upon which there will be something to be said when the narrative reaches the events of that date. Here it need only be stated that, in the eyes of Ulstermen at all events, constitutional orthodoxy is quite a different thing from

loyalty, and that true allegiance to the Sovereign is by them sharply differentiated from passive obedience to an Act of Parliament.

The sincerity with which this loyalist creed is held by practically the entire Protestant population of Ulster cannot be questioned by anyone who knows the people, however much he may criticise it on other grounds. And equally sincere is the conviction held by the same people that disloyalty is, and always has been, the essential characteristic of Nationalism. The conviction is founded on close personal contact continued through many generations with the adherents of that political party, and the tradition thus formed draws more support from authentic history than many Englishmen are willing to believe. Consequently, when the General Election of 1918 revealed that the whole of Nationalist Ireland had gone over with foot, horse, and artillery, with bag and baggage, from the camp of so-called Constitutional Home Rule, to the Sinn Feiners who made no pretence that their aim was anything short of complete independent sovereignty for Ireland, no surprise was felt in Ulster. It was there realised that nothing had happened beyond the throwing off of the mask which had been used as a matter of political tactics to disguise what had always been the real underlying aim, if not of the parliamentary leaders, at all events of the great mass of Nationalist opinion throughout the three southern provinces. The whole population had not with one consent changed their views in the course of a night; they had merely rallied to support the first leaders whom they had found prepared to proclaim the true objective. Curiously enough, this truth was realised by an English politician who was in other respects conspicuously deficient in insight regarding Ireland. The Easter insurrection of 1916 in Dublin was only rendered possible by the negligence or the incompetence of the Chief Secretary; but, in giving evidence before the Commission appointed to inquire into it, Mr. Birrell said: "The spirit of what to-day is called Sinn Feinism is mainly composed of the old hatred and distrust of the British connection . . . always there as the back-

ground of Irish politics and character" ; and, after recalling that Cardinal Newman had observed the same state of feeling in Dublin more than half a century before, Mr. Birrell added quite truly that "this dislike, hatred, disloyalty (so unintelligible to many Englishmen) is hard to define but easy to discern, though incapable of exact measurement from year to year." This disloyal spirit, which struck Newman, and which Mr. Birrell found easy to discern, was of course always familiar to Ulstermen as characteristic of "the South and West," and was their justification for the badge of "loyalist," their assumption of which English Liberals, knowing nothing of Ireland, held to be an unjust slur on the Irish majority.

If this belief in the inherent disloyalty of Nationalist Ireland to the British Empire did any injustice to individual Nationalist politicians, they had nobody but themselves to blame for it. Their pronouncements in America, as well as at home, were scrutinised in Ulster with a care that Englishmen seldom took the trouble to give them. Nor must it be forgotten that, up to the date when Mr. Gladstone made Home Rule a plank in an English party's programme—which, whatever else it did, could not alter the facts of the case—the same conviction, held in Ulster so tenaciously, had prevailed almost universally in Great Britain also ; and had been proclaimed by no one so vehemently as by Mr. Gladstone himself, whose famous declarations that the Nationalists of that day were "steeped to the lips in treason," and were "marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire," were not so quickly forgotten in Ulster as in England, nor so easily passed over as either meaningless or untrue as soon as they became inconvenient for a political party to remember. English supporters of Home Rule, when reminded of such utterances, dismissed with a shrug the "unedifying pastime of unearthing buried speeches" ; and showed equal determination to see nothing in speeches delivered by Nationalist leaders in America inconsistent with the purely constitutional demand for "extended self-government."

Ulster never would consent to bandage her own eyes in

similar fashion, or to plug her ears with wool. The "two voices" of Nationalist leaders, from Mr. Parnell to Mr. Dillon, were equally audible to her; and, of the two, she was certain that the true aim of Nationalist policy was expressed by the one whose tone was disloyal to the British Empire. Look-out was kept for any change in the direction of moderation, for any real indication that those who professed to be "constitutional Nationalists" were any less determined than "the physical force party" to reach the goal described by Parnell in the famous sentence, "None of us will be . . . satisfied until we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England."

No such indication was ever discernible. On the contrary, Parnell's phrase became a refrain to be heard in many later pronouncements of his successors, and the policy he thus described was again and again propounded in after-years on innumerable Nationalist platforms, in speeches constantly quoted to prove, as was the contention of Ulster from the first, that Home Rule as understood by English Liberals was no more than an instalment of the real demand of Nationalists, who, if they once obtained the "comparative freedom" of an Irish legislature —to quote the words used by Mr. Devlin at a later date —would then, with that leverage, "operate by whatever means they should think best to achieve the great and desirable end" of complete independence of Great Britain.

This was an end that could not by any juggling be reconciled with the Ulsterman's notion of "loyalty." Moreover, whatever knowledge he possessed of his country's history—and he knows a good deal more, man for man, than the Englishman—confirmed his deep distrust of those whom, following the example of John Bright, he always bluntly described as "the rebel party." He knew something of the rebellions in Ireland in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and was under no illusion as to the design for which arms had been taken up in the past. He knew that that design had not changed with the passing of generations, although gentler methods of accomplishing it might sometimes find favour. Indeed, one Nationalist leader himself took

pains, at a comparatively recent date, to remove any excuse there may ever have been for doubt on this point. Mr. John Redmond was an orator who selected his words with care, and his appeals to historical analogies were not made haphazard. When he declared (in a speech in 1901) that, "in its essence, the national movement to-day is the same as it was in the days of Hugh O'Neill, of Owen Roe, of Emmet, or of Wolfe Tone," those names, which would have had but a shadowy significance for a popular audience in England, carried very definite meaning to the ears of Irishmen, whether Nationalist or Unionist. Mr. Gladstone, in the fervour of his conversion to Home Rule, was fond of allusions to the work of Molyneux and Swift, Flood and Grattan; but these were men whose Irish patriotism never betrayed them into disloyalty to the British Crown or hostility to the British connection. They were reformers, not rebels. But it was not with the political ideals of such men that Mr. Redmond claimed his own to be identical, nor even with that of O'Connell, the apostle of repeal of the Union, but with the aims of men who, animated solely by hatred of England, sought to establish the complete independence of Ireland by force of arms, and in some cases by calling in (like Roger Casement in our own day) the aid of England's foreign enemies.

In the face of appeals like this to the historic imagination of an impressionable people, it is not surprising that by neither Mr. Redmond's followers nor by his opponents was much account taken of his own personal disapproval of extremes both of means and ends. His opponents in Ulster simply accepted such utterances as confirmation of what they had known all along from other sources to be the actual facts, namely, that the Home Rule agitation was "in its essence" a separatist movement; that its adherents were, as Mr. Redmond himself said on another occasion, "as much rebels as their fathers were in 1798"; and that the men of Ulster were, together with some scattered sympathisers in the other Provinces, the depositaries of the "loyal" tradition.

The latter could boast of a pedigree as long as that of the rebels. If Mr. Redmond's followers were to trace

their political ancestry, as he told them, to the great Earl of Tyrone who essayed to overthrow England with the help of the Spaniard and the Pope, the Ulster Protestants could claim descent from the men of the Plantation, through generation after generation of loyalists who had kept the British flag flying in Ireland in times of stress and danger, when Mr. Redmond's historical heroes were making England's difficulty Ireland's opportunity.

There have been, and are, many individual Nationalists, no doubt, especially among the more educated and thoughtful, to whom it would be unjust to impute bad faith when they professed that their political aspirations for Ireland were really limited to obtaining local control of local affairs, and who resented being called "Separatists," since their desire was not for separation from Great Britain but for the "union of hearts," which they believed would grow out of extended self-government. But the answer of Irish Unionists, especially in Ulster, has always been that, whatever such "moderate," or "constitutional" Nationalists might dream, it would be found in practice, if the experiment were made, that no halting-place could be found between legislative union and complete separation. Moreover, the same view was held by men as far as possible removed from the standpoint of the Ulster Protestant. Cardinal Manning, for example, although an intimate personal friend of Gladstone, in a letter to Leo XIII, wrote: "As for myself, Holy Father, allow me to say that I consider a Parliament in Dublin and a separation to be equivalent to the same thing. Ireland is not a Colony like Canada, but it is an integral and vital part of one country." [1]

It is improbable that identical lines of reasoning led the Roman Catholic Cardinal and the Belfast Orangeman and Presbyterian to this identical conclusion; but a position reached by convergent paths from such distant points of departure is defensible presumably on grounds more solid than prejudice or passion. It is unnecessary here to examine those grounds at length, for the present purpose is not to argue the Ulster case, but to let the reader know

[1] *Henry Edward Manning*, by Shane Leslie, p. 406.

what was, as a matter of fact, the Ulster point of view, whether that point of view was well or ill founded.

But, while the opinion that a Dublin Parliament meant separation was shared by many who had little else in common with the Ulster Protestants, the latter stood alone in the intensity of their conviction that "Home Rule meant Rome Rule." It has already been mentioned that it is the "disloyalty" attributed rightly or wrongly to the Roman Catholics as a body that has been, in recent times at all events, the mainspring of Protestant distrust. But sectarian feeling, everywhere common between rival creeds, is, of course, by no means absent. Englishmen find it hard to understand what seems to them the bigoted and senseless animosity of the rival faiths in Ireland. This is due to the astonishing shortness of their memory in regard to their own history, and their very limited outlook on the world outside their own island. If, without looking further back in their history, they reflected that the "No Popery" feeling in England in mid-Victorian days was scarcely less intense than it is in Ulster to-day; or if they realised the extent to which Gambetta's "Le cléricalisme, voilà l'ennemi" continues still to influence public life in France, they might be less ready to censure the Irish Protestant's dislike of priestly interference in affairs outside the domain of faith and morals. It is indeed remarkable that Nonconformists, especially in Wales, who within living memory have displayed their own horror of the much milder form of sacerdotalism to be found in the Anglican Church, have no sympathy apparently with the Presbyterian and the Methodist in Ulster when the latter kick against the encompassing pressure of the Roman Catholic priesthood, not in educational matters alone, but in all the petty activities of every-day life.

Whenever this aspect of the Home Rule controversy was emphasised Englishmen asked what sort of persecution Irish Protestants had to fear from a Parliament in Dublin, and appeared to think all such fear illusory unless evidence could be adduced that the Holy Office was to be set up at Maynooth, equipped with faggot and thumbscrew. Of persecution of that sort there never has been,

of course, any apprehension in modern times. Individual Catholics and Protestants live side by side in Ireland with fully as much amity as elsewhere, but whereas the Catholic instinctively, and by upbringing, looks to the parish priest as his director in all affairs of life, the Protestant dislikes and resists clerical influence as strongly as does the Nonconformist in England and Wales—and with much better reason. For the latter has never known clericalism as it exists in a Roman Catholic country where the Church is wholly unrestrained by the civil power. He has resented what he regards as Anglican arrogance in regard to educational management or the use of burying-grounds, but he has never experienced a much more aggressive clerical temper exercised in all the incidents of daily life—in the market, the political meeting, the disposition of property, the amusements of the people, the polling booth, the farm, and the home.

This involves no condemnation of the Irish priest as an individual or as a minister of his Church. He is kind-hearted, charitable, and conscientious; and, except that it does not encourage self-reliance and enterprise, his influence with his own people is no more open to criticism than that of any other body of religious ministers. But the Roman Catholic Church has always made a larger claim than any other on the obedience of its adherents, and it has always enforced that obedience whenever it has had the power by methods which, in Protestant opinion, are extremely objectionable. In theory the claim may be limited to affairs concerned with faith and morals; but the definition of such affairs is a very elastic one. Cardinal Logue not many years ago said: "When political action trenches upon faith or morals or affects religion, the Vicar of Christ, as the supreme teacher and guardian of faith and morals, and as the custodian of the immunities of religion, has, by Divine Right, authority to interfere and to enforce his decisions." How far this principle is in practice carried beyond the limits so defined was proved in the famous Meath election petition in 1892, in which the Judge who tried it, himself a devout Catholic, declared: "The Church became converted for the time being into a vast political agency, a

great moral machine moving with resistless influence, united action, and a single will. Every priest who was examined was a canvasser; the canvas was everywhere —on the altar, in the vestry, on the roads, in the houses." And while an election was in progress in County Tyrone in 1911 a parish priest announced that any Catholic who should vote for the Unionist candidate "would be held responsible at the Day of Judgment." A still more notorious example of clericalism in secular affairs, within the recollection of Englishmen, was the veto on the Military Service Act proclaimed from the altars of the Catholic Churches, which, during the Great War, defeated the application to Ireland of the compulsory service which England, Scotland, and Wales accepted as the only alternative to national defeat and humiliation.

But these were only conspicuous examples of what the Irish Protestant sees around him every day of his life. The promulgation in 1908 of the Vatican decree, *Nec Temere*, a papal reassertion of the canonical invalidity of mixed marriages, followed as it was by notorious cases of the victimisation of Protestant women by the application of its principles, did not encourage the Protestants to welcome the prospect of a Catholic Parliament that would have control of the marriage law; nor did they any more readily welcome the prospect of national education on purely ecclesiastical lines. Another Vatican decree that was equally alarming to Protestants was that entitled *Motu Proprio*, by which any Catholic layman was *ipso facto* excommunicated who should have the temerity to bring a priest into a civil court either as defendant or witness. Medievalism like this was felt by Ulster Protestants to be irreconcilable with modern ideas of democratic freedom, and to indicate a temper that boded ill for any regime which would be subject to its inspiration. These were matters, it is true,—and there were perhaps some others of a similar nature—on which it is possible to conceive more or less satisfactory legislative safeguards being provided; but as regards the indefinable but innumerable minutiæ in which the prevailing ecclesiastical standpoint creates an atmosphere in which daily life has to be carried

on, no safeguards could be devised, and it was the realisation of this truth in the light of their own experience that made the Ulstermen continually close their ears to allurements of that sort.

The Roman Church is quite consistent, and from its own point of view praiseworthy, in its assertion of its right, and its duty, to control the lives and thoughts of men; but this assertion has produced a clash with the non-ecclesiastical mind in almost every country where Catholicism is the dominant religious faith. But in Ireland, unlike Continental countries, there is no Catholic lay opinion—or almost none—able to make its voice heard against clerical dictation, and consequently the Protestants felt convinced, with good reason, that any legislature in Ireland must take its tone from this pervading mental and moral atmosphere, and that all its proceedings would necessarily be tainted by it.

Prior to 1885 the political complexion of Ulster was in the main Liberal. The Presbyterians, who formed the majority of the Protestant population, collateral descendants of the men who emigrated in the eighteenth century and formed the backbone of Washington's army, and direct descendants of those who joined the United Irishmen in 1798, were of a pronounced Liberal type, and their frequently strong disapproval of Orangeism made any united political action an improbable occurrence. But the crisis brought about by Gladstone's declaration in favour of Home Rule instantly swept all sections of Loyalists into a single camp. There was practically not a Liberal left who did not become Unionist, and, although a separate organisation of Liberal Unionists was maintained, the co-operation with Conservatives was so whole-hearted and complete as almost to amount to fusion from the outset.

The immediate cessation of class friction was still more remarkable. For more than a decade the perennial quarrel between landlord and tenant had been increasing in intensity, and the recent land legislation had disposed the latter to look upon Gladstone as a deliverer. Their gratitude was wiped out the moment he hoisted the green flag, while the labourers enfranchised by the Act of 1884

eagerly enrolled themselves as the bitterest enemies of his new Irish policy. The unanimity of the country-side was matched in the towns, and especially in Belfast, where, with the single exception of a definitely Catholic quarter, employer and artisan were as whole-heartedly united as were landlord and tenant in passionate resentment at what they regarded as the betrayal by England's foremost statesman of England's only friends in Ireland.

The defeat of the Home Rule Bill of 1886 brought relief from the immediate strain of anxiety. But it was at once realised that the encouragement and support given to Irish disloyalty for the first time by one of the great political parties in Great Britain was a step that could never be recalled. Henceforth the vigilance required to prevent being taken unawares, and the untiring organisation necessary for making effective defence against an attack which, although it had signally failed at the first onslaught, was certain to be renewed, welded all the previously diverse social and political elements in Ulster into a single compact mass, tempered to the maximum power of resistance. There was room for no other thought in the minds of men who felt as if living in a beleaguered citadel, whose flag they were bound in honour to keep flying to the last. The "loyalist" tradition acquired fresh meaning and strength, and its historical setting took a more conscious hold on the public mind of Ulster, as men studied afresh the story of the Relief of Derry or the horrors of 1641. Visits of encouragement from the leaders of Unionism across the Channel, men like Lord Salisbury, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Randolph Churchill, fortified the resolution of a populace that came more and more to regard themselves as a bulwark of the Empire, on whom destiny, while conferring on them the honour of upholding the flag, had imposed the duty of putting into actual practice the familiar motto of the Orange Lodges—"No surrender."

From a psychology so bred and nourished sprang a political temper which, as it hardened with the passing years, appeared to English Home Rulers to be "stiff-necked," "bigoted," and "intractable." It certainly was

a state of mind very different from those shifting gusts of transient impression which in England go by the name of public opinion; and, if these epithets in the mouths of opponents be taken as no more than synonyms for "uncompromising," they were not undeserved. At a memorable meeting at the Albert Hall in London on the 22nd of April, 1893, Dr. Alexander, Bishop of Derry, poet, orator, and divine, declared in an eloquent passage that was felt to be the exact expression of Ulster conviction, that the people of Ulster, when exhorted to show confidence in their southern fellow-countrymen, "could no more be confiding about its liberty than a pure woman can be confiding about her honour."

Here was the irreconcilable division. The Nationalist talked of centuries of "oppression," and demanded the dissolution of the Union in the name of liberty. The Ulsterman, while far from denying the misgovernment of former times, knew that it was the fruit of false ideas which had passed away, and that the Ireland in which he lived enjoyed as much liberty as any land on earth; and he feared the loss of the true liberty he had gained if put back under a regime of Nationalist and Utramontane domination. And so for more than thirty years the people of Ulster for whom Bishop Alexander spoke made good his words. If in the end compromise was forced upon them it was not because their standpoint had changed, and it was only in circumstances which involved no dishonour, and which preserved them from what they chiefly dreaded, subjection to a Dublin Parliament inspired by clericalism and disloyalty to the Empire.

The development which brought about the change from Ulster's resolute stand for unimpaired union with Great Britain to her reluctant acceptance of a separate local constitution for the predominantly Protestant portion of the Province, presents a deeply interesting illustration of the truth of a pregnant dictum of Maine's on the working of democratic institutions.

"Democracies," he says, "are quite paralysed by the plea of nationality. There is no more effective way of attacking them than by admitting the right of the majority

to govern, but denying that the majority so entitled is the particular majority which claims the right." [1]

This is precisely what occurred in regard to Ulster's relation to Great Britain and to the rest of Ireland respectively. The will of the majority must prevail, certainly. But what majority? Unionists maintained that only the majority in the United Kingdom could decide, and that it had never in fact decided in favour of repealing the Act of Union; Lord Rosebery at one time held that a majority in Great Britain alone, as the "Predominant Partner," must first give its consent; Irish Nationalists argued that the majority in Ireland, as a distinct unit, was the only one that should count. Ulster, whilst agreeing with the general Unionist position, contended ultimately that her own majority was as well entitled to be heard in regard to her own fate as the majority in Ireland as a whole. To the Nationalist claim that Ireland was a nation she replied that it was either two nations or none, and that if one of the two had a right to "self-determination," the other had it equally. Thus the axiom of democracy that government is by the majority was, as Maine said, "paralysed by the plea of nationality," since the contending parties appealed to the same principle without having any common ground as to how it should be applied to the case in dispute.

If the Union with Great Britain was to be abrogated, which Pitt had only established when "a full measure of Home Rule" had produced a bloody insurrection and Irish collusion with England's external enemies, Ulster could at all events in the last resort take her stand on Abraham Lincoln's famous proposition which created West Virginia: "A minority of a large community who make certain claims for self-government cannot, in logic or in substance, refuse the same claims to a much larger proportionate minority among themselves."

The Loyalists of Ulster were successful in holding this second line, when the first was no longer tenable; but they only retired from the first line—the maintenance of the legislative union—after a long and obstinate defence which it is the purpose of the following pages to relate.

[1] Sir S. H. Maine, *Popular Government*, p. 28.

CHAPTER II

THE ELECTORATE AND HOME RULE

We profess to be a democratic country in which the "will of the people" is the ultimate authority in determining questions of policy, and the Liberal Party has been accustomed to regard itself as the most zealous guardian of democratic principles. Yet there is this curious paradox in relation to the problem which more than any other taxed British statesmanship during the thirty-five years immediately following the enfranchisement of the rural democracy in 1884, that the solution propounded by the Liberal Party, and inscribed by that party on the Statute-book in 1914, was more than once emphatically rejected, and has never been explicitly accepted by the electorate.

No policy ever submitted to the country was more decisively condemned at the polls than Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule proposals in the General Election of 1886. The issue then for the first time submitted to the people was isolated from all others with a completeness scarcely ever practicable—a circumstance which rendered the "mandate" to Parliament to maintain the legislative union exceptionally free from ambiguity. The party which had brought forward the defeated proposal, although led by a statesman of unrivalled popularity, authority, and power, was shattered in the attempt to carry it, and lost the support of numbers of its most conspicuous adherents, including Chamberlain, Hartington, Goschen, and John Bright, besides a multitude of its rank and file, who entered into political partnership with their former opponents in order to withstand the new departure of their old Chief.

The years that followed were a period of preparation by both sides for the next battle. The improvement in the

state of Ireland, largely the result of legislation carried by Lord Salisbury's Government, especially that which promoted land purchase, encouraged the confidence felt by Unionists that the British voter would remain staunch to the Union. The downfall of Parnell in 1890, followed by the break-up of his party, and by his death in the following year, seemed to make the danger of Home Rule still more remote. The only disquieting factor was the personality of Mr. Gladstone, which, the older he grew, exercised a more and more incalculable influence on the public mind. And there can be no doubt that it was this personal influence that made him, in spite of his policy, and not because of it, Prime Minister for the fourth time in 1892. In Great Britain the electors in that year pronounced against Home Rule again by a considerable majority, and it was only by coalition with the eighty-three Irish Nationalist Members that Gladstone and his party were able to scrape up a majority of forty in support of his second Home Rule Bill. Whether there was any ground for Gladstone's belief that but for the O'Shea divorce he would have had a three-figure majority in 1892 is of little consequence, but the fall of his own majority in Midlothian from 4,000 to below 700, which caused him "intense chagrin,"[1] does not lend it support. Lord Morley says Gladstone was blamed by some of his friends for accepting office "depending on a majority not large enough to coerce the House of Lords"[2]; but a more valid ground of censure was that he was willing to break up the constitution of the United Kingdom, although a majority of British electors had just refused to sanction such a thing being done. That Gladstone's colleagues realised full well the true state of public opinion on the subject, if he himself did not, was shown by their conduct when the Home Rule Bill, after being carried through the House of Commons by diminutive majorities, was rejected on second reading by the Peers. Even their great leader's entreaty could not persuade them to consent to an appeal to the people[3]; and when they were tripped up over the

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, iii, 492.
[2] Ibid., 493. [3] Ibid., 505.

cordite vote in 1895, after Gladstone had disappeared from public life, none of them probably were surprised at the overwhelming vote by which the constituencies endorsed the action of the House of Lords, and pronounced for the second time in ten years against granting Home Rule to Ireland.

If anything except the personal ascendancy of Gladstone contributed to his small coalition majority in 1892 it was no doubt the confidence of the electors that the House of Lords could be relied upon to prevent the passage of a Home Rule Bill. It is worth noting that nearly twenty years later Lord Crewe acknowledged that the Home Rule Bill of 1893 could not have stood the test of a General Election or of a Referendum.[1]

During the ten years of Unionist Government from 1895 to 1905 the question of Home Rule slipped into the background. Other issues, such as those raised by the South African War and Mr. Chamberlain's tariff policy, engrossed the public mind. English Home Rulers showed a disposition to hide away, if not to repudiate altogether, the legacy they had inherited from Gladstone. Lord Rosebery acknowledged the necessity to convert "the predominant partner," a mission which every passing year made appear a more hopeless undertaking. At by-elections Home Rule was scarcely mentioned. In the eyes of average Englishmen the question was dead and buried, and most people were heartily thankful to hear no more about it. Mr. T. M. Healy's caustic wit remarked that "Home Rule was put into cold storage." [2]

Then came the great overthrow of the Unionists in 1906. Home Rule, except by its absence from Liberal election addresses, contributed nothing at all to that resounding Liberal victory. The battle of "terminological inexactitudes" rang with cries of Chinese "slavery," Tariff Reform, Church Schools, Labour Dispute Bills, and so forth; but on Ireland silence reigned on the platforms of the victors. The event was to give the successors of Mr. Gladstone a House of Commons in complete subjection to

[1] *Annual Register*, 1910, p. 240.

[2] See *Letters to Isabel*, by Lord Shaw of Dunfermline, p. 130.

them. For the first time since 1885 they had a majority independent of the Nationalists, a majority, if ever there was one, " large enough to coerce the House of Lords," as they would have done in 1893, according to Lord Morley, if they had had the power. But to do that would involve the danger of having again to appeal to the country, which even at this high tide of Liberal triumph they could not face with Home Rule as an election cry. So, with the tame acquiescence of Mr. Redmond and his followers, they spent four years of unparalleled power without laying a finger on Irish Government, a course which was rendered easy for them by the fact that, on their own admission, they had found Ireland in a more peaceful, prosperous, and contented condition than it had enjoyed for several generations. Occasionally, indeed, as was necessary to prevent a rupture with the Nationalists, some perfunctory mention of Home Rule as a *desideratum* of the future was made on Ministerial platforms—by Mr. Churchill, for example, at Manchester in May 1909. But by that date even the contest over Tariff Reform—which had raged without intermission for six years, and by rending the Unionist Party had grievously damaged it as an effective instrument of opposition—had become merged in the more immediately exciting battle of the Budget, provoked by Mr. Lloyd George's financial proposals for the current year, and by the possibility that they might be rejected by the House of Lords. This the House of Lords did, on the 30th of November, 1909, and the Prime Minister at once announced that he would appeal to the country without delay.

Such a turn of events was a wonderful windfall for the Irish Nationalists, beyond what the most sanguine of them can ever have hoped for. The rejection of a money Bill by the House of Lords raised a democratic blizzard, the full force of which was directed against the constitutional power of veto possessed by the hereditary Chamber in relation not merely to money Bills, but to general legislation. For a long time the Liberal Party had been threatening that part of the Constitution without much effect. Sixteen years had passed since Mr. Gladstone in

his last speech in the House of Commons declared that issue must be joined with the Peers; but the emphatic endorsement by the constituencies in 1895 of the Lords' action which he had denounced, followed by ten years of Unionist Government, damped down the ardour of attack so effectually that, during the four years in which the Liberals enjoyed unchallengeable power, from 1906 to 1910, they did nothing to carry out Gladstone's parting injunction. Had they done so at any time when Home Rule was a living issue in the country an attack on the Lords would in all probability have proved disastrous to themselves. For there was not a particle of evidence that the electors of Great Britain had changed their minds on this subject, and there were great numbers of voters in the country—those voters, unattached to party, who constitute "the swing of the pendulum," and decide the issue at General Elections—who felt free to vote Liberal in 1906 because they believed Home Rule was practically dead, and if revived would be again given its *quietus*, as in 1893, by the House of Lords. But the defeat of the Budget in November 1909 immediately opened a line of attack wholly unconnected with Ireland, and over the most favourable ground that could have been selected for the assault.

Nothing could have been more skilful than the tactics employed by the Liberal leaders. Concentrating on the constitutional question raised by the alleged encroachment of the Lords on the exclusive privilege of the Commons to grant supply, they tried to excite a hurricane of popular fury by calling on the electorate to decide between "Peers and People." The rejected Finance Bill was dubbed "The People's Budget." A "Budget League" was formed to expatiate through the constituencies on the democratic character of its provisions, and on the personal and class selfishness of the Peers in throwing it out. As little as possible was said about Ireland, and probably not one voter in ten thousand who went to the poll in January 1910 ever gave a thought to the subject, or dreamed that he was taking part in reversing the popular verdict of 1886 and 1895. Afterwards, when it was complained that

an election so conducted had provided no " mandate " for Home Rule, it was found that in the course of a long speech delivered by Mr. Asquith at the Albert Hall on the 10th of December there was a sentence in which the Prime Minister had declared that " the Irish problem could only be solved by a policy which, while explicitly safeguarding the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament, would set up self-government in Ireland in regard to Irish affairs." The rest of the speech dealt with Tariff Reform and with the constitutional question of the House of Lords, on which the public mind was focused throughout the election.

In the unprecedented deluge of oratory that flooded the country in the month preceding the elections the Prime Minister's sentence on Ireland at the Albert Hall passed almost unnoticed in English and Scottish constituencies, or was quickly lost sight of, like a coin in a cornstack, under sheaves of rhetoric about the dear loaf and the intolerable arrogance of hereditary legislators. Here and there a Unionist candidate did his best to warn a constituency that every Liberal vote was a vote for Home Rule. He was invariably met with an impatient retort that he was attempting to raise a bogey to divert attention from the iniquity of the Lords and the Tariff Reformers. Home Rule, he was told, was dead and buried.

On the 19th of January, 1910, when the elections were over in the boroughs, Mr. Asquith claimed that " the great industrial centres had mainly declared for Free Trade," and the impartial chronicler of the *Annual Register* stated that " the Liberals had fought on Free Trade and the constitutional issue." The twice-repeated decision of the country against Home Rule for Ireland was therefore in no sense reversed by the General Election of January 1910.

But from the very beginning of the agitation over the Budget and the action of the House of Lords in relation to it, in the summer of 1909, the gravity of the situation so created was fully appreciated by both political parties in Ireland itself. Only the most languid interest was there taken in the questions which stirred the constitu-

encies across the Channel. Neither Nationalist nor Unionist cared anything whatever for Free Trade ; neither of them shed a tear over the rejected Budget. Indeed, Mr. Lloyd George's new taxes were so unpopular in Ireland that Mr. Redmond was violently attacked by Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. Healy for his neglect of obvious Irish interests in supporting the Government. Mr. Redmond, for his part, made no pretence that his support was given because he approved of the proposals for which he and his followers gave their votes in every division. The clauses of the Finance Bill were trifles in his eyes that did not matter. His gaze was steadily fixed on the House of Peers, which he saw before him as a huntsman views a fox with bedraggled brush, reduced to a trot a field or two ahead of the hounds. That House was, as he described it, " the last obstacle to Home Rule," and he was determined to do all he could to remove the obstacle. Lord Rosebery said at Glasgow in September 1909 that he believed Ministers wanted the House of Lords to reject the Budget. Whether they did or not, there can be no doubt that Mr. Redmond did, for he knew that, in that event, the whole strength of the Liberal Party would be directed to the task of beating down the " last obstacle," and that then it would be possible to carry Home Rule without the British constituencies being consulted. It was with this end in view that he took his party into the lobby in support of a Budget that was detested in Ireland, and threw the whole weight of his influence in British constituencies on to the Liberal side in the elections of January 1910.

But, notwithstanding the torrent of class prejudice and democratic passion that was stirred up by six weeks of Liberal oratory, the result of the elections was a serious loss of strength to the Government. The commanding Liberal majority of 1906 over all parties in the House of Commons disappeared, and Mr. Asquith and his Cabinet were once more dependent on a coalition of Labour Members and Nationalists. The Liberals by themselves had a majority of two only over the Unionists, who had won over one hundred seats, so that the Nationalists

were easily in a position to enforce their leader's threat to make Mr. Asquith "toe the line."

When the Parliament elected in January 1910 assembled disputes arose between the Government and the Nationalists as to whether priority was to be given to passing the Budget rejected in the previous session, or to the Parliament Bill which was to deprive the House of Lords of its constitutional power to reject legislation passed by the Commons; and Mr. Redmond expressed his displeasure that "guarantees" had not yet been obtained from the King, or, in plain language, that a promise had not been extorted from the Sovereign that he would be prepared to create a sufficient number of Peers to secure the acceptance of the Parliament Bill by the Upper House.

The whole situation was suddenly changed by the death of King Edward in May 1910. Consideration for the new and inexperienced Sovereign led to the temporary abandonment of coercion of the Crown, and resort was had to a Conference of party leaders, with a view to settlement of the dispute by agreement. But no agreement was arrived at, and the Conference broke up on the 10th of November. Parliament was again dissolved in December, "on the assumption," as Lord Crewe stated, "that the House of Lords would reject the Parliament Bill."

During the agitation of this troubled autumn preceding the General Election, the question of Home Rule was not quite so successfully concealed from view as in the previous year. The Liberals, indeed, maintained the same tactical reserve on the subject, alike in their writings and their speeches. The Liberal Press of the period may be searched in vain for any clear indication that the electors were about to be asked to decide once more this momentous constitutional question. Such mention of it as was occasionally to be found in ministerial speeches seemed designed to convey the idea that, while the door leading to Home Rule was still formally open, there was no immediate prospect of its being brought into use. The Prime Minister in particular did everything in his power to direct the attention of the country to the same issues as in the preceding January, among which Ireland had

had no place. In presenting the Government's case at Hull on the 25th of November, he reminded the country that in the January elections the veto of the Peers was "the dominant issue"; in the intervening months the Government, he said, had brought forward proposals for dealing with the veto, and had given the Lords an opportunity to make proposals of their own; a defeat of the Liberals in the coming elections would bring in "Protection disguised as Tariff Reform"; but he (Mr. Asquith) preferred to concentrate his criticism on Lord Lansdowne's "crude and complex scheme" for Second Chamber reform; he made a passing mention of "self-government for Ireland" as a policy that would have the sympathy of the Dominions, but added that "the immediate task was to secure fair play for Liberal legislation and popular government." And in his election address Mr. Asquith declared that "the appeal to the country was almost narrowed to a single issue, and on its determination hung the whole future of democratic Government."

This zeal for "popular," or "democratic" government was, however, not inconsistent apparently with a determination to avoid at all hazards consulting the will of the people, before doing what the people had hitherto always refused to sanction. The suggestion had been made earlier in the autumn that a Referendum, or "Poll of the People" might be taken on the question of Home Rule. The very idea filled the Liberals with dismay. Speaking at Edinburgh on the 2nd of December, Mr. Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made the curiously naive admission, for a "democratic" politician, that the Referendum would amount to "a prohibitive tariff against Liberalism." A few days earlier at Reading (November 29th) his Chief sought to turn the edge of this disconcerting proposal by asking whether the Unionists, if returned to power, would allow Tariff Reform to be settled by the same mode of appeal to the country; and when Mr. Balfour promptly accepted the challenge by promising that he would do so Mr. Asquith retreated under cover of the excuse that no bargain had been intended.

While the Liberal leaders were thus doing all they could to hold down the lid of the Home Rule Jack-in-the-box, the Unionists were warning the country that as soon as Mr. Asquith secured a majority his thumb would release the spring. Speakers from Ulster carried the warning into many constituencies, but it was noticed that they were constantly met with the same retort as in January—that Home Rule was a "bogey," or a "red herring" dragged across the trail of Tariff Reform and the Peers' veto; and it is a significant indication of the straits to which the Government afterwards felt themselves driven to find justification for dealing with so fundamental a question as the repeal of the Union without the explicit approval of the electorate, that they devised the strange doctrine that speeches by their opponents provided them with a mandate for a policy about which they had themselves kept silence, even although those speeches had been disbelieved and derided on the very ground that it would be impossible for Ministers to bring forward a policy they had not laid before the country during the election.

The extent to which this ministerial reserve was carried was shown by a question put to Mr. Asquith in his own constituency in East Fife on the 6th of December. Scottish "hecklers" are intelligent and well informed on current politics, and no one who knows them can imagine one of them asking the Prime Minister whether he intended to introduce a Home Rule Bill if Home Rule had been proclaimed as one of the chief items in the policy of the Government. Mr. Asquith gave an affirmative reply; but the elections were by this time half over, and in the following week Mr. Balfour laid stress on the fact that five hundred contests had been decided before any Minister had mentioned Home Rule. Even after giving this memorable answer in East Fife Mr. Asquith, speaking at Bury St. Edmunds on the 12th of December, declared that "the sole issue at that moment was the supremacy of the people," and he added, in deprecation of all the talk about Ireland, that "it was sought to confuse this issue by catechising Ministers on the details of the next Home Rule Bill."

Even if this had been, as it was not, a true description of the attempts that had been made to extract a frank declaration from the Government as to their intentions in regard to this vitally important matter—far more important to hundreds of thousands of people than any question of Tariff, or of limiting the functions of the Second Chamber —it was surely a curious doctrine to be propounded by a statesman zealous to preserve "popular government"! There had been two Home Rule Bills in the past, differing one from the other in not a few important respects; discussion had shown that many even of those who supported the principle of Home Rule objected strongly to this or that proposal for embodying it in legislation. Language had been used by Mr. Asquith himself, as well as by some of his principal colleagues, which implied that any future Home Rule Bill would be part of a general scheme of "devolution," or federation, or "Home Rule All Round"—a solution of the question favoured by many who hotly opposed separate treatment for Ireland. Yet here was the responsible Minister, in the middle of a General Election, complaining that the issue was being "confused" by presumptuous persons who wanted to know what sort of Home Rule, if any, he had in contemplation in the event of obtaining a majority sufficient to keep him in power.

Under such circumstances it would have been a straining of constitutional principles, and a flagrant violation of the canons of that "democratic government" of which Mr. Asquith had constituted himself the champion, to pass a Home Rule Bill by means of a majority so obtained, even if the majority had been one that pointed to a sweeping turnover of public opinion to the side of the Government. The elections of December 1910, in point of fact, gave no such indication. The Government gained nothing whatever by the appeal to the country. Liberals and Unionists came back in almost precisely the same strength as in the previous Parliament. They balanced each other within a couple of votes in the new House of Commons, and the Ministry could not have remained twenty-four hours in office except in coalition with Labour and the Irish Nationalists.

The Parliament so elected and so constituted was destined not merely to destroy the effective power of the House of Lords, and to place on the Statute-book a measure setting up an Irish Parliament in Dublin, but to be an assembly longer in duration and more memorable in achievement than any in English history since the Long Parliament. During the eight years of its reign the Great War was fought and won; the "rebel party" in Ireland once more, as in the Napoleonic Wars, broke into armed insurrection in league with the enemies of England; and before it was dissolved the political parties in Great Britain, heartily supported by the Loyalists of Ulster, composed the party differences which had raged with such passion over Home Rule and other domestic issues, and joined forces in patriotic resistance to the foreign enemy.

But before this transformation took place nearly four years of agitation and contest had to run their course. In the first session of the Parliament, by a violent use of the Royal Prerogative, the Parliament Bill became law, the Peers accepting the measure under duress of the threat that some four or five hundred peerages would, if necessary, be created to form a majority to carry it. It was then no longer possible for the Upper House to force an appeal to the country on Home Rule, as it had done in 1893. All that was necessary was for a Bill to be carried in three successive sessions through the House of Commons, to become law. "The last obstacle to Home Rule," as Mr. Redmond called it, had been removed. The Liberal Government had taken a hint from the procedure of the careful burglar, who poisons the dog before breaking into the house.

The significance of the manner in which the Irish question had been kept out of view of the electorate by the Government and their supporters was not lost upon the people of Ulster. In January 1911, within a month of the elections, a meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council was held at which a comprehensive resolution dealing with the situation that had arisen was adopted, and published as a manifesto. One of its clauses was:

"The Council has observed with much surprise the singular reticence as regards Home Rule maintained by a large number of Radical candidates in England and Scotland during the recent elections, and especially by the Prime Minister himself, who barely referred to the subject till almost the close of his own contest. In view of the consequent fact that Home Rule was not at the late appeal to the country placed as a clear issue before the electors, it is the judgment of the Council that the country has given no mandate for Home Rule, and that any attempt in such circumstances to force through Parliament a measure enacting it would be for His Majesty's Ministers a grave, if not criminal, breach of constitutional duty."

The great importance, in relation to the policy subsequently pursued by Ulster, of the historical fact here made clear—namely, that the "will of the people" constitutionally expressed in parliamentary elections has never declared itself in favour of granting Home Rule to Ireland, lies, first, in the justification it afforded to the preparations for active resistance to a measure so enacted; and, secondly, in the influence it had in procuring for Ulster not merely the sympathy but the open support of the whole Unionist Party in Great Britain. Lord Londonderry, one of Ulster's most trusted leaders, who afterwards gave the whole weight of his support to the policy of forcible resistance, admitted in the House of Lords in 1911, in the debates on the Parliament Bill, that the verdict of the country, if appealed to, would have to be accepted. The leader of the Unionist Party, Mr. Bonar Law, made it clear in February 1914, as he had more than once stated before, that the support he and his party were pledging themselves to give to Ulster in the struggle then approaching a climax, was entirely due to the fact that the electorate had never sanctioned the policy of the Government against which Ulster's resistance was threatened. The chance of success in that resistance "depended," he said, "upon the sympathy of the British people, and an election would undoubtedly make a great difference in that respect"; he denied that Mr. Asquith had a "right to pass any form of Home Rule without a

mandate from the people of this country, which he has never received"; and he categorically announced that "if you get the decision of the people we shall obey it." And if, as then appeared likely, the unconstitutional conduct of the Government should lead to bloodshed in Ireland, the responsibility, said Mr. Bonar Law, would be theirs, "because you preferred to face civil war rather than face the people." [1]

[1] *Parliamentary Debates* (5th Series), vol. lviii, pp. 279–84.

CHAPTER III

ORGANISATION AND LEADERSHIP

From the day when Gladstone first made Home Rule for Ireland the leading issue in British politics, the Loyalists of Ulster—who, as already explained, included practically all the Protestant population of the Province both Conservative and Liberal, besides a small number of Catholics who had no separatist sympathies—set to work to organise themselves for effective opposition to the new policy. In the hour of their dismay over Gladstone's surrender Lord Randolph Churchill, hurrying from London to encourage and inspirit them, told them in the Ulster Hall on the 22nd of February, 1886, that "the Loyalists in Ulster should wait and watch—organise and prepare." [1] They followed his advice. Propaganda among themselves was indeed unnecessary, for no one required conversion except those who were known to be inconvertible. The chief work to be done was to send speakers to British constituencies; and in the decade from 1885 to 1895 Ulster speakers, many of whom were ministers of the different Protestant Churches, were in request on English and Scottish platforms.

A number of organisations were formed for this purpose, some of which, like the Irish Unionist Alliance, represented Unionist opinion throughout Ireland, and not in Ulster alone. Others were exclusively concerned with the northern Province, where from the first the opposition was naturally more concentrated than elsewhere. In the early days, the Ulster Loyalist and Patriotic Union, organised by Lord Ranfurly and Mr. W. R. Young, carried on an active and sustained campaign in Great Britain, and the Unionist Clubs initiated by Lord Temple-

[1] *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by the Right Hon. W. S. Churchill, vol. ii, p. 62.

town provided a useful organisation in the smaller country towns, which still exists as an effective force. The Loyal Orange Institution, founded at the end of the eighteenth century to commemorate, and to keep alive the principles of, the Whig Revolution of 1688, had fallen into not unmerited disrepute prior to 1886. Few men of education or standing belonged to it, and the lodge meetings and anniversary celebrations had become little better than occasions for conviviality wholly inconsistent with the irreproachable formularies of the Order. But its system of local Lodges, affiliated to a Grand Lodge in each county, supplied the ready-made framework of an effective organisation. Immediately after the introduction of Gladstone's first Bill in 1886 it received an immense accession of strength. Large numbers of country gentlemen, clergymen of all Protestant denominations, business and professional men, farmers, and the better class of artisans in Belfast and other towns, joined the local Lodges, the management of which passed into capable hands; the character of the Society was thereby completely and rapidly transformed, and, instead of being a somewhat disreputable and obsolete survival, it became a highly respectable as well as an exceedingly powerful political organisation, the whole weight of whose influence has been on the side of the Union.

A rallying cry was given to the Ulster Loyalists in the famous phrase contained in a letter from Lord Randolph Churchill to a correspondent in May 1886: "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right." From this time forward the idea that resort to physical resistance would be preferable to submission to a Parliament in Dublin controlled by the "rebel party" took hold of the popular mind in Ulster, although after the elections of 1886 there was no serious apprehension that the necessity would arise, until the return to power of Mr. Gladstone at the head of a small majority in 1892 brought about a fresh crisis.

The work of organisation was then undertaken with greater energy and thoroughness than before. It was now that Lord Templetown founded the Unionist Clubs, which spread in an affiliated network through Ulster, and

proved so valuable that, after falling into neglect during the ten years of Conservative Government, they were revived at the special request of the Ulster Unionist Council in December 1910. Nothing, however, did so much to stimulate organisation and concentration of effort as the great Convention held in Belfast on the 19th of June 1892, representing on a democratic basis all the constituencies in Ulster. Numerous preliminary meetings were arranged for the purpose of electing the delegates; and of these the Special Correspondent of *The Times* wrote:

"Nothing has struck me more in the present movement than the perfect order and regularity with which the preliminary meetings for the election of delegates has been conducted. From city and town and village come reports of crowded and enthusiastic gatherings, all animated by an equal ardour, all marked by the same spirit of quiet determination. There has been no 'tall talk,' no overstatement; the speeches have been dignified, sensible, and practical. One of the most marked features in the meetings has been the appearance of men who have never before taken part in public life, who have never till now stood on a public platform. Now for the first time they have broken with the tranquil traditions of a lifetime, and have come forward to take their share and their responsibility in the grave danger which threatens their country."[1]

There being no building large enough to hold the delegates, numbering nearly twelve thousand, every one of whom was a registered voter appointed by the polling districts to attend the Convention, a pavilion, the largest ever used for a political meeting in the kingdom, was specially constructed close to the Botanical Gardens in Belfast. It covered 33,000 square feet, and, owing to the enthusiasm of the workmen employed on the building, it was erected (at a cost of over £3,000) within three weeks. It provided seating accommodation for 13,000 people, but the number who actually gained admittance to the Convention was nearly 21,000, while outside an assemblage, estimated by the correspondent of *The Times* at 300,000, was also addressed by the principal speakers.

[1] *The Times*, June 16th, 1892.

The commencement of the proceedings with prayer, conducted by the Primate of all Ireland and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, set a precedent which was extensively followed in later years throughout Ulster, marking the spirit of seriousness which struck numerous observers as characteristic of the Ulster Movement. The speakers were men representative of all the varied interests of the Province—religious, agricultural, commercial, and industrial—and among them were two men, Mr. Thomas Sinclair and Mr. Thomas Andrews, who had been life-long Liberals, but who from this time forward were distinguished and trusted leaders of Unionist opinion in Ulster. It was Mr. Andrews who touched a chord that vibrated through the vast audience, making them leap to their feet, cheering for several minutes. "As a last resource," he cried, "we will be prepared to defend ourselves." But the climax of this memorable assembly was reached when the chairman, the Duke of Abercorn, with upraised arm, and calling on the audience solemnly to repeat the words one by one after him, gave out what became for the future the motto and watchword of Ulster loyalty: "We will not have Home Rule." It was felt that this simple negation constituted a solemn vow taken by the delegates, both for themselves and for those they represented—an act of self-dedication to which every loyal man and woman in Ulster was committed, and from which there could be no turning back.

The principal Resolution, adopted unanimously by the Convention, formulated the grounds on which the people of the Province based their hostility to the separatist policy of Home Rule; and as frequent reference was made to it in after-years as an authoritative definition of Ulster policy, it may be worth while to recall its terms:

"That this Convention, consisting of 11,879 delegates representing the Unionists of every creed, class, and party throughout Ulster, appointed at public meetings held in every electoral division of the Province, hereby solemnly resolves and declares: 'That we express the devoted loyalty of Ulster Unionists to the Crown and Constitution of the United Kingdom; that we avow our fixed resolve

to retain unchanged our present position as an integral portion of the United Kingdom, and protest in the most unequivocal manner against the passage of any measure that would rob us of our inheritance in the Imperial Parliament, under the protection of which our capital has been invested and our homes and rights safeguarded; that we record our determination to have nothing to do with a Parliament certain to be controlled by men responsible for the crime and outrages of the Land League, the dishonesty of the Plan of Campaign, and the cruelties of boycotting, many of whom have shown themselves the ready instruments of clerical domination; that we declare to the people of Great Britain our conviction that the attempt to set up such a Parliament in Ireland will inevitably result in disorder, violence, and bloodshed, such as have not been experienced in this century, and announce our resolve to take no part in the election or proceedings of such a Parliament, the authority of which, should it ever be constituted, we shall be forced to repudiate; that we protest against this great question, which involves our lives, property, and civil rights, being treated as a mere side-issue in the impending electoral struggle; that we appeal to those of our fellow countrymen who have hitherto been in favour of a separate Parliament to abandon a demand which hopelessly divides Irishmen, and to unite with us under the Imperial Legislature in developing the resources and furthering the best interests of our common country.' "

There can be no doubt that the Ulster Convention of 1892, and the numerous less imposing demonstrations which followed on both sides of the Channel and took their tone from it, of which the most notable was the great meeting at the Albert Hall in London on the 22nd of April, 1893, had much effect in impressing and instructing public opinion, and thus preparing the way for the smashing defeat of the Liberal Home Rule Party in the General Election of 1895. After that event vigilance again relaxed during the ten years of Unionist predominance which followed. But the organisation was kept intact, and its democratic method of appointing delegates in every polling district provided a permanent electoral machinery for the Unionist Party in the constituencies,

as well as the framework for the Ulster Unionist Council, which was brought into existence in 1905, largely through the efforts of Mr. William Moore, M.P. for North Armagh. This Council, with its executive Standing Committee, was thenceforward the acknowledged authority for determining all questions of Unionist policy in Ulster.

Its first meeting was held on the 3rd of March, 1905, under the presidency of Colonel James McCalmont, M.P. for East Antrim. The first ten members of the Standing Committee were nominated by Colonel Saunderson, M.P., as chairman of the Ulster Parliamentary Party. They were, in addition to the chairman himself, the Duke of Abercorn, the Marquis of Londonderry, the Earl of Erne, the Earl of Ranfurly, Colonel James McCalmont, M.P., the Hon. R. T. O'Neill, M.P., Mr. G. Wolff, M.P., Mr. J. B. Lonsdale, M.P., and Mr. William Moore, K.C., M.P. These nominations were confirmed by a ballot of the members of the Council, and twenty other members were elected forthwith to form the Standing Committee. This first Executive Committee of the organisation which for the next fifteen years directed the policy of Ulster Unionism included several names that were from this time forward among the most prominent in the movement. There were the two eminent Liberals, Mr. Thomas Sinclair and Mr. Thomas Andrews, and Mr. John Young, all three of whom were members of the Irish Privy Council; Colonel R. H. Wallace, C.B., Mr. W. H. H. Lyons, and Sir James Stronge, leaders of the Orangemen; Colonel Sharman-Crawford, Mr. E. M. Archdale, Mr. W. J. Allen, Mr. R. H. Reade, and Sir William Ewart. Among several "Unionist candidates for Ulster constituencies" who were at the same meeting co-opted to the Council, we find the names of Captain James Craig and Mr. Denis Henry, K.C. The Duke of Abercorn accepted the position of President of the Council, and Mr. E. M. Archdale was elected chairman of the Standing Committee. Mr. T. H. Gibson was appointed secretary. In October 1906 the latter resigned his post owing to failing health, and, on the motion of Mr. William Moore, M.P., Mr. Richard Dawson Bates, a solicitor practising in Belfast, was "temporarily"

appointed to fill the vacancy. This temporary appointment was never formally made permanent, but no question in regard to the secretaryship was ever raised, for Mr. Bates performed the duties year after year to the complete satisfaction of everyone connected with the organisation, and in a manner that earned the gratitude of all Ulster Unionists. The funds at the disposal of the Council in 1906 only enabled a salary of £100 a year to be paid to the secretary—a salary that was purely nominal in the case of a professional gentleman of Mr. Bates's standing; but the spirit in which he took up his duties was seen two years later, when it was found that out of this salary he had himself been paying for clerical assistance; and then, of course, this matter was properly adjusted, which the improved financial position of the Council happily rendered possible.

The declared purpose of the Ulster Unionist Council was to form a union of all local Unionist Associations in Ulster; to keep the latter in constant touch with their parliamentary representatives; and "to be the medium of expressing Ulster Unionist opinion as current events may from time to time require." It consisted at first of not more than 200 members, of whom 100 represented local Associations, and 50 represented the Orange Lodges, the remaining 50 being made up of Ulster members of both Houses of Parliament and of certain "distinguished residents in or natives of Ulster" to be co-opted by the Council. As time went on the Council was considerably enlarged, and its representative character improved. In 1911 the elected membership was raised to 370, and included representatives of local Associations, Orange Lodges, Unionist Clubs, and the Derry Apprentice Boys. In 1918 representatives of the Women's Associations were added, and the total elected membership was increased to 432. The delegates elected by the various constituent bodies were in the fullest sense representative men; they were drawn from all classes of the population; and, by the regularity with which they attended meetings of the Council whenever business of any importance was to be transacted, they made it the most effective political organisation in the United Kingdom.

A campaign of public meetings in England and Scotland conducted jointly by the Ulster Unionist Council and the Irish Unionist Alliance in 1908 led to a scheme of co-operation between the two bodies, the one representing Unionists in the North and the other those in the southern Provinces, which worked smoothly and effectively. A joint Committee of the Unionist Associations of Ireland was therefore formed in the same year, the organisations represented on it being the two already named and the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union. The latter, which in earlier years had done excellent spade-work under the fostering zeal of Lord Ranfurly and Mr. William Robert Young, was before 1911 amalgamated with the Unionist Council, so that all rivalry and overlapping was thence-forward eliminated from the organisation of Unionism in Ulster. The Council in the North and the Irish Unionist Alliance in Dublin worked in complete harmony both with each other and with the Union Defence League in London, whose operations were carried on under the direction of its founder, Mr. Walter Long.

The women of Ulster were scarcely less active than the men in the matter of organisation. Although, of course, as yet unenfranchised, they took as a rule a keener interest in political matters—meaning thereby the one absorbing question of the Union—than their sex in other parts of the United Kingdom. When critical times for the Union arrived there was, therefore, no apathy to be overcome by the Protestant women in Ulster. Early in 1911 the "Ulster Women's Unionist Council" was formed under the presidency of the Duchess of Abercorn, and very quickly became a most effective organisation side by side with that of the men. The leading spirit was the Marchioness of Londonderry, but that it was no aristocratic affair of titled ladies may be inferred from the fact that within twelve months of its formation between forty and fifty thousand members were enrolled. A branch in Mr. Devlin's constituency of West Belfast, which over four thousand women joined in its first month of existence, of whom over 80 per cent. were mill-workers and shop-girls in the district, held a very effective demonstration on the

11th of January, 1912, at which Mr. Thomas Sinclair, the most universally respected of Belfast's business men, made one of his many telling speeches which familiarised the people with the commercial and financial aspects of Home Rule, as it would be felt in Ulster. The central Women's Council followed this up with a more imposing gathering in the Ulster Hall on the 18th, which adopted with intense enthusiasm the declaration: "We will stand by our husbands, our brothers, and our sons, in whatever steps they may be forced to take in defending our liberties against the tyranny of Home Rule."

Thus before the end of 1911 men and women alike were firmly organised in Ulster for the support of their loyalist principles. But the most effective organisation is impotent without leadership. Among the declared "objects" of the Ulster Unionist Council was that of acting "as a connecting link between Ulster Unionists and their parliamentary representatives." In the House of Commons the Ulster Unionist Members, although they recognised Colonel Edward Saunderson, M.P., as their leader until his death in 1906, did not during his lifetime, or for some years afterwards, constitute a separate party or group. When Colonel Saunderson died the Right Hon. Walter Long, who had held the office of Chief Secretary in the last year of the Unionist Administration, and who had been elected for South Dublin in 1906, became leader of the Irish Unionists—with whom those representing Ulster constituencies were included. But in the elections of January 1910 Mr. Long was returned for a London seat, and it therefore became necessary for Irish Unionists to select another leader.

By this time the Home Rule question had, as the people of Ulster perceived, become once more a matter of vital urgency, although, as explained in the preceding chapter, the electors of Great Britain were too engrossed by other matters to give it a thought, and the Liberal Ministers were doing everything in their power to keep it in the background. The Ulster Members of the House of Commons realised, therefore, the grave importance of finding a leader of the calibre necessary for dealing on

equal terms with such orators and Parliamentarians as Mr. Asquith and Mr. John Redmond. They did not deceive themselves into thinking that such a leader was to be found among their own number. They could produce several capable speakers, and men of judgment and good sense; but something more was needed for the critical times they saw ahead. After careful consideration, they took a step which in the event proved to be of momentous importance, and of extreme good fortune, for the enterprise that the immediate future had in store for them. Mr. J. B. Lonsdale, Member for Mid Armagh, Hon. Secretary of the Irish Unionist Parliamentary Party, was deputed to request Sir Edward Carson, K.C., to accept the leadership of the Irish Unionist party in the House of Commons.

Several days elapsed before they received an answer; but when it came it was, happily for Ulster, an acceptance. It is easy to understand Sir Edward Carson's hesitation before consenting to assume the leadership. After carrying all before him in the Irish Courts, where he had been Law Officer of the Crown, he had migrated to London, where he had been Solicitor-General during the last six years of the Unionist Administration, and by 1910 had attained a position of supremacy at the English Bar, with the certain prospect of the highest legal advancement, and with an extremely lucrative practice, which his family circumstances made it no light matter for him to sacrifice, but which he knew it would be impossible for him to retain in conjunction with the political duties he was now urged to undertake. Although only in his fifty-seventh year, he was never one of those who feel younger than their age; nor did he minimise in his own mind the disability caused by his too frequent physical ailments, which inclined him to shrink from embarking upon fresh work the extent and nature of which could not be exactly foreseen. As to ambition, there are few men who ever were less moved by it, but he could not leave altogether out of consideration his firm conviction—which ultimately proved to have been ill-founded—that acceptance of the Ulster leadership would cut him off from all promotion, whether political or legal.[1]

[1] He expressed this conviction to the author in 1911.

Moreover, although for the moment it was the leadership of a parliamentary group to which he was formally invited, it was obvious that much more was really involved; the people in Ulster itself needed guidance in the crisis that was visibly approaching. Ever since Lord Randolph Churchill, with the concurrence of Lord Salisbury, first inspired them in 1886 with the spirit of resistance in the last resort to being placed under a Dublin Parliament, and assured them of British sympathy and support if driven to that extremity, the determination of Ulster in this respect was known to all who had any familiarity with the temper of her people. Any man who undertook to lead them at such a juncture as had been reached in 1910 must make that determination the starting-point of his policy. It was a task that would require not only statesmanship, but political courage of a high order. Lord Randolph Churchill, in his famous Ulster Hall speech, had said that "no portentous change such as the repeal of the Union, no change so gigantic, could be accomplished by the mere passing of a law; the history of the United States will teach us a different lesson." Ulster always took her stand on the American precedent, though the exemplar was Lincoln rather than Washington. But although the scale of operations was, of course, infinitely smaller, the Ulster leader would, if it came to the worst, be confronted by certain difficulties from which Abraham Lincoln was free. He might have to follow the example of the latter in forcibly resisting secession, but his legal position would be very different. He might be called upon to resist technically legal authority, whereas Lincoln had it at his back. To guide and control a headstrong people, smarting under a sense of betrayal, when entering on a movement pregnant with these issues, and at the same time to stand up against a powerful Government on the floor of the House of Commons, was an enterprise upon which any far-seeing man might well hesitate to embark.

Pondering over the invitation conveyed to him in his Chambers in the Temple, Carson may, therefore, well have asked himself what inducement there was for him to accept it. He was not an Ulsterman. As a Southerner

he was not familiar with the psychology of the northern Irish; the sectarian narrowness popularly attributed to them outside their province was wholly alien to his character; he was as far removed by nature from a fire-eater as it was possible for man to be; he was not fond of unnecessary exertion; he preferred the law to politics, and disliked addressing political assemblies. In Parliament he represented, not a popular constituency, but the University of Dublin. But, on the other hand, he was to the innermost core of his nature an Irish Loyalist. His youthful political sympathies had, indeed, been with the Liberal Party, but he instantly severed his connection with it when Gladstone joined hands with Parnell. He had made his name at the Irish Bar as Crown Prosecutor in the troubled period of Mr. Balfour's Chief Secretaryship, and this experience had bred in him a hearty detestation of the whining sentimentality, the tawdry and exaggerated rhetoric, and the manufactured discontent that found vent in Nationalist politics. A sincere lover of Ireland, he had too much sound sense to credit the notion that either the freedom or the prosperity of the country would be increased by loosening the tie with Great Britain. Although he as yet knew little of Ulster, he admired her resolute stand for the Union, her passionate loyalty to the Crown; he watched with disgust the way in which her defences were being sapped by the Liberal Party in England; and the thought that such a people were perhaps on the eve of being driven into subjection to the men whose character he had had so much opportunity to gauge in the days of the Land League filled him with indignation.

If, therefore, he could be of service in helping to avert so great a wrong Sir Edward Carson came to the conclusion that it would be shirking a call of duty were he to decline the leadership that had been offered him. Realising to the full all that it meant for himself—inevitable sacrifice of income, of ease, of chances of promotion, a burden of responsibility, a probability of danger—he gave his consent; and the day he gave it—the 21st of February, 1910—should be marked for all time as a red-letter day in the Ulster calendar.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARLIAMENT ACT: CRAIGAVON

A good many months were to elapse before the Unionist rank and file in Ulster were brought into close personal touch with the new leader of the Irish Unionist Parliamentary Party. The work to be done in 1910 lay chiefly in London, where the constitutional struggle arising out of the rejection of the "People's Budget" was raging. But shortly before the General Election of December a demonstration was held in the Ulster Hall in Belfast, in the hope of opening the eyes of the English and Scottish electors to the danger of Home Rule. Mr. Walter Long was the principal speaker, and Sir Edward Carson, in supporting the resolution, ended his speech by quoting Lord Randolph Churchill's famous jingling phrase, "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right."

On the 31st of January, 1911, when the elections were over, he went over from London to preside at an important meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council. The Annual Report of the Standing Committee, in welcoming his succession to Mr. Long in the leadership, spoke of his requiring no introduction to Ulstermen; and it is true that he had occasionally spoken at meetings in Belfast, and that his recent speech in the Ulster Hall had made an excellent impression. But he was not yet a really familiar figure even in Belfast, while outside the city he was practically unknown, except of course by repute. That a man of his sagacity would quickly make his weight felt was never in doubt; but few at that time can have anticipated the extent to which a stranger—with an accent proclaiming an origin south of the Boyne—was in a short time to captivate the hearts, and become literally the idolised leader, of the Ulster democracy.

For the latter are a people who certainly do not wear

their hearts on their sleeves for daws to peck at. In the eyes of the more volatile southern Celts they seem a "dour" people. They are naturally reserved, laconic of speech, without "gush," far from lavish in compliment, slow to commit themselves or to give their confidence without good and proved reason.

Opportunity for the populace to get into closer touch with the leader did not, however, come till the autumn. He was unable to attend the Orange celebration on the 12th of July, when the anniversary, which preceded by less than a month the "removal of the last obstacle to Home Rule" by the passing of the Parliament Act, was kept with more than the usual fervour, and the speeches proved that the gravity of the situation was fully appreciated. The Marquis of Londonderry, addressing an immense concourse of Belfast Lodges, stated that it was the first time an Ex-Viceroy had been present at an Orange gathering, but that he had deliberately created the precedent owing to his sense of the danger threatening the Loyalist cause.

It was the first of innumerable similar actions by which Lord Londonderry identified himself whole-heartedly with the popular movement, throwing aside all the conventional restraints of rank and wealth, and thereby endearing himself to every man and woman in Protestant Ulster. There was no more familiar figure in the streets of Belfast. Barefooted street urchins, catching sight of him on the steps of the Ulster Club, would gather round and, with free-and-easy familiarity, shout "Three cheers for Londonderry." He knew everybody and was everybody's friend. There was no aristocratic hauteur or aloofness about his genial personality. He was in the habit of entertaining the whole Unionist Council, some five hundred strong, at luncheon or dinner as the occasion required, when important meetings of the delegates took place. Distinguished political visitors from England could always be invited over without thought for their entertainment, since a welcome at Mount Stewart was never wanting. His financial support of the political movement was equally open-handed.

But, helpful as were his hospitality and his subscriptions,

it was the countenance and support of a man who had held high Cabinet office, and especially the great position of Viceroy of Ireland, that made Lord Londonderry's full participation an asset of incalculable value to the cause he espoused. Moreover, while he was always ready to cross the Channel, even if for a few hours only, when wanted for any conference or public meeting, never pleading his innumerable social and political engagements in London or the North of England as an excuse for absence, his natural modesty of character made it easy for him to act under the leadership of another. Indeed, he underrated his own abilities; but there are probably not many men of his prominence and antecedents who, if similarly placed, would have been able to give, without a trace of *amour-propre*, to a leader who had in former years been his own official subordinate, the consistently loyal backing that Lord Londonderry gave to Sir Edward Carson.

But, although there never was the slightest friction between the two men, a difference of opinion between them on an important point showed itself within a few months of Carson's acceptance of the leadership. In July 1911 the excitement over the Parliament Bill reached its climax. When the Government announced that the King had given his assent to the creation of whatever number of peerages might be required for carrying the measure through the Upper House, the party known as "Die Hards" were for rejecting it and taking the consequences; while against this policy were ranged Lord Lansdowne, Lord Curzon, and other Unionist leaders, who advocated the acceptance of the Bill under protest. On the 20th of July Carson told Lansdowne that in his judgment "the disgrace and ignominy of surrender on the question far outweighed any temporary advantage" to be gained by the two years' delay of Home Rule which the Parliament Bill would secure.[1] Lord Londonderry, on the other hand, supported the view taken by Lord Lansdowne, and he voted with the majority who carried the Bill on the 10th of August. This step temporarily clouded his popularity in Ulster, but not many weeks

[1] *Annual Register*, 1911, p. 175.

passed before he completely regained the confidence and affection of the people, and the difference of opinion never in the smallest degree interrupted the harmony of his relations with Sir Edward Carson.

The true position of affairs in relation to Home Rule had not yet been grasped by the British public. As explained in a former chapter, it had not been in any real sense an issue in the two General Elections of the previous year, and throughout the spring and summer of 1911 popular interest in England and Scotland was still wholly occupied with the fight between " Peers and People " and the impending blow to the power of the Second Chamber ; and the coronation festivities also helped to divert attention from the political consequences to which the authors of the Parliament Bill intended it to lead.

The first real awakening was brought about by an immense demonstration held at Craigavon, on the outskirts of Belfast, on the 23rd of September. The main purpose of this historic gathering was to bring the populace of Ulster face to face with their new leader, and to give him an opportunity of making a definite pronouncement of a policy for Ulster, in view of the entirely novel situation resulting from the passing of the Parliament Act.

For that Act made it possible for the first time for the Liberal Home Rule Party to repeal the Act of Union without an appeal to the country. It enacted that any Bill which in three successive sessions was passed without substantial alteration through the House of Commons might be presented for the Royal Assent without the consent of the Lords ; and an amendment to exclude a Home Rule Bill from its operation had been successfully resisted by the Government. It also reduced the maximum legal duration of a Parliament from seven to five years ; but the existing Parliament was still in its first session, and there was therefore ample time, under the provisions of the new Constitution, to pass a Home Rule Bill before the next General Election, as the coalition of parties in favour of Home Rule constituted a substantial majority in the House of Commons.

The question, therefore, which the Ulster people had

now to decide was no longer simply how they could bring about the rejection of a Home Rule Bill by propaganda in the British constituencies, as they had hitherto done with unfailing success, although that object was still kept in view, but what course they should adopt if a Home Rule Act should be placed on the Statute-book without those constituencies being consulted. Was the day at last approaching when Lord Randolph Churchill's exhortation must be obeyed? Or were they to be compelled, because the Cabinet had coerced the Sovereign and tricked the people by straining the royal prerogative in a manner described by Mr. Balfour as "a gross violation of constitutional liberty," to submit with resignation to the government of their country by the "rebel party"—the party controlled by clerical influence, and boasting of the identity of its aims with those of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet? This was the real problem in the minds of those who flocked to Craigavon on Saturday, the 23rd of September, 1911, to hear what proposals Sir Edward Carson had to lay before his followers.

Craigavon was the residence of Captain James Craig, Member of Parliament for East Down. It is a spacious country house standing on a hill above the road leading from Belfast to Holywood, with a fine view of Belfast Lough and the distant Antrim coast beyond the estuary. The lawn in front of the house, sloping steeply to the shore road, forms a sort of natural amphitheatre offering ideal conditions for out-of-door oratory to an unlimited audience. At the meeting on the 23rd of September the platform was erected near the crest of the hill, enabling the vast audience to spread out fan-wise over the lower levels, where even the most distant had the speakers clearly in view, even if many of them, owing to the size of the gathering, were unable to hear the spoken word.

It was on this occasion that Captain Craig, by the care with which every minute detail of the arrangements was thought out and provided for, first gave evidence of his remarkable gift for organisation that was to prove so invaluable to the Ulster cause in the next few years. The greater part of the audience arrived in procession, which,

starting from the centre of the city of Belfast, took over two hours to pass a given point, at the quick march in fours. All the Belfast Orange Lodges, and representative detachments from the County Grand Lodges, together with Lord Templetown's Unionist Clubs, and other organisations, including the Women's Association, took part in the procession. But immense numbers of people attended the meeting independently; it was calculated that not less than a hundred thousand were present during the delivery of Sir Edward Carson's speech, and although there must have been very many of them who could hear nothing, the complete silence maintained by all was a remarkable proof—or so it appeared to men experienced in out-door political demonstrations—of the earnestness of spirit that prevailed. To some it may appear still more remarkable that, with such a concourse of people within a couple of miles of Belfast, not a single policeman was present, and that none was required; no disturbance of any sort occurred during the day, nor was a single case of drunkenness observed.

It had been intended that the Duke of Abercorn, whose inspiring exhortation as chairman of the Ulster Convention in 1892 had never been forgotten, should preside over the meeting; but, as he was prevented by a family bereavement from being present, his place was taken by the Earl of Erne, Grand Master of the Orange Order. The scene, when he rose to open the proceedings, was indescribable in its impressiveness. Some members of the Eighty Club happened to be in Ireland at the time, for the purpose of "seeing for themselves" in the familiar fashion of such political tourists; but they did not think it worth while to witness what Ulster was doing at Craigavon. If they had, they could have made a report to their political leaders which, had it been truthful, might have averted some irreparable blunders; for they could hardly have looked upon that sea of eager faces, or have observed the enthusiasm that possessed such a host of earnest and resolute men, without revising the opinion, which they had accepted from Mr. Redmond, that there was "no Ulster question."

The meeting took the form of according a welcome to Sir Edward Carson as the new leader of Irish Loyalism, and of Ulster in particular. But before he rose to speak a significant note had already been sounded. Lord Erne struck it when he quoted words which were to become very familiar in Ulster—the letter from Gustavus Hamilton, Governor of Enniskillen in 1689, to " divers of the nobility and gentry in the north-east part of Ulster," in which he declared: " We stand upon our guard, and do resolve by the blessing of God to meet our danger rather than to await it." And the veteran Liberal, Mr. Thomas Andrews, in moving the resolution of welcome to the leader, expressed the universal sentiment of the multitude when he exclaimed, " We will never, never bow the knee to the disloyal factions led by Mr. John Redmond. We will never submit to be governed by rebels who acknowledge no law but the laws of the Land League and illegal societies."

A great number of Addresses from representative organisations were then presented to Sir Edward Carson, in many of which the determination to resist the jurisdiction of a Dublin Parliament was plainly declared. But such declarations, although they undoubtedly expressed the mind of the people, were after all in quite general terms. For a quarter of a century innumerable variations on the theme " Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right," had been fiddled on Ulster platforms, so that there was some excuse for the belief of those who were wholly ignorant of North Irish character that these utterances were no more than the commonplaces of Ulster rhetoric. The time had only now come, however, when their reality could be put to the test. Carson's speech at Craigavon crystallised them into practical politics.

Sir Edward Carson's public speaking has always been entirely free from rhetorical artifice. He seldom made use of metaphor or imagery, or elaborate periods, or variety of gesture. His language was extremely simple and straightforward; but his mobile expression—so variable that his enemies saw in it a suggestion of Mephistopheles, and his friends a resemblance to Dante—

his measured diction, and his skilful use of a deep-toned voice, gave a remarkable impressiveness to all he said—even, indeed, to utterances which, if spoken by another, would sometimes have sounded commonplace or obvious. Sarcasm he could use with effect, and a telling point was often made by an epigrammatic phrase which delighted his hearers. And, more than all else, his meaning was never in doubt. In lucidity of statement he excelled many much greater orators, and was surpassed by none; and these qualities, added to his unmistakable sincerity and candour, made him one of the most persuasive of speakers on the platform, as he was also, of course, in the Law Courts.

The moment he began to speak at Craigavon the immense multitude who had come to welcome him felt instinctively the grip of his power. The contrast to all the previous scene—the cheering, the enthusiasm, the marching, the singing, the waving of handkerchiefs and flags—was deeply impressive, when, after a hushed pause of some length, he called attention without preface to the realities of the situation in a few simple sentences of slow and almost solemn utterance:

"I know full well what the Resolution you have just passed means; I know what all these Addresses mean; I know the responsibility you are putting upon me to-day. In your presence I cheerfully accept it, grave as it is, and I now enter into a compact with you, and every one of you, and with the help of God you and I joined together—I giving you the best I can, and you giving me all your strength behind me—we will yet defeat the most nefarious conspiracy that has ever been hatched against a free people. But I know full well that this Resolution has a still wider meaning. It shows me that you realise the gravity of the situation that is before us, and it shows me that you are here to express your determination to see this fight out to a finish."

He went on to expose the hollowness of the allegation, then current in Liberal circles, that Ulster's repugnance to Home Rule was less uncompromising than it formerly had been. On the contrary, he believed that "there never was a moment at which men were more resolved than at

the present, with all the force and strength that God has given them, to maintain the British connection and their rights as citizens of the United Kingdom." Apart from principle or sentiment, that was an attitude, he maintained, dictated by practical good sense. He showed how Ireland had been "advancing in prosperity in an unparalleled measure," for which he could quote the authority of Mr. Redmond himself, although the Nationalist leader had omitted to notice that this advance had taken place under the legislative Union, and, as Carson contended, in consequence of it. He laid special emphasis on the point, never forgotten, that the danger in which they stood was due to the hoodwinking of the British constituencies by Mr. Asquith's Ministry.

"Make no mistake; we are going to fight with men who are prepared to play with loaded dice. They are prepared to destroy their own Constitution, so that they may pass Home Rule, and they are prepared to destroy the very elements of constitutional government by withdrawing the question from the electorate, who on two previous occasions refused to be a party to it."

He ridiculed the "paper safeguards" which Liberal Ministers tried to persuade them would amply protect Ulster Protestants under a Dublin Parliament, giving a vivid picture of the plight they would be in under a Nationalist administration, which, he declared, meant "a tyranny to which we never can and never will submit"; and then, in a pregnant passage, he summarised the Ulster case:

"Our demand is a very simple one. We ask for no privileges, but we are determined that no one shall have privileges over us. We ask for no special rights, but we claim the same rights from the same Government as every other part of the United Kingdom. We ask for nothing more; we will take nothing less. It is our inalienable right as citizens of the British Empire, and Heaven help the men who try to take it from us."

It was all no doubt a mere restatement—though an admirably lucid and forcible restatement—of doctrine with which his hearers had long been familiar. The great question still awaited an answer—how was effect to be

given to this resolve, now that there was no longer hope of salvation through the sympathy and support of public opinion in Great Britain? This was what the eager listeners at Craigavon hoped in hushed expectancy to hear from their new leader. He did not disappoint them:

"Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, says that we are not to be allowed to put our case before the British electorate. Very well. By that determination he drives you in the ultimate result to rely upon your own strength, and we must follow all that out to its logical conclusion. . . . That involves something more than that we do not accept Home Rule. We must be prepared, in the event of a Home Rule Bill passing, with such measures as will carry on for ourselves the government of those districts of which we have control. We must be prepared—and time is precious in these things—the morning Home Rule passes, ourselves to become responsible for the government of the Protestant Province of Ulster. We ask your leave at the meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council, to be held on Monday, there to discuss the matter, and to set to work, to take care that at no time and at no intervening interval shall we lack a Government in Ulster, which shall be a Government either by the Imperial Parliament, or by ourselves."

Here, then, was the first authoritative declaration of a definite policy to be pursued by Ulster in the circumstances then existing or foreseen, and it was a policy that was followed with undeviating consistency under Carson's leadership for the next nine years. To be left under the government of the Imperial Parliament was the alternative to be preferred, and was asserted to be an inalienable right; but, if all their efforts to that end should be defeated, then "a government by ourselves" was the only change that could be tolerated. Rather than submit to the jurisdiction of a Nationalist legislature and administration, they would themselves set up a Government "*in those districts of which they had control.*" It was because, when the first of these alternatives had to be sorrowfully abandoned, the second was offered in the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 that Ulster did not actively oppose the passing of that statute.

CHAPTER V

THE CRAIGAVON POLICY AND THE U.F.V.

No time was lost in giving practical shape to the policy outlined at Craigavon, and in taking steps to give effect to it. On the 25th of September a meeting of four hundred delegates representing the Ulster Unionist Council, the County Grand Orange Lodges, and the Unionist Clubs, was held in Belfast, and, after lengthy discussion in private, when the only differences of opinion were as to the most effective methods of proceeding, two resolutions were unanimously adopted and published. It is noteworthy that, at this early stage in the movement, out of nearly four hundred popularly elected delegates, numbers of whom were men holding responsible positions or engaged in commercial business, not one raised an objection to the policy itself, although its grave possibilities were thoroughly appreciated by all present. Both Lord Londonderry, who presided, and Sir Edward Carson left no room for doubt in that respect; the developments they might be called upon to face were thoroughly searched and explained, and the fullest opportunity to draw back was offered to any present who might shrink from going on.

The first Resolution registered a "call upon our leaders to take any steps they may consider necessary to resist the establishment of Home Rule in Ireland, solemnly pledging ourselves that under no conditions shall we acknowledge any such Government"; and it gave an assurance that those whom the delegates represented would give the leaders "their unwavering support in any danger they may be called upon to face." The second decided that "the time has now come when we consider it our imperative duty to make arrangements for the provisional government of Ulster," and for that purpose

it went on to appoint a Commission of five leading local men, namely, Captain James Craig, M.P., Colonel Sharman Crawford, M.P., the Right Hon. Thomas Sinclair, Colonel R. H. Wallace, C.B., and Mr. Edward Sclater, Secretary of the Unionist Clubs, whose duties were (*a*) "to keep Sir Edward Carson in constant and close touch with the feeling of Unionist Ulster," and (*b*) "to take immediate steps, in consultation with Sir Edward Carson, to frame and submit a Constitution for a Provisional Government of Ulster, having due regard to the interests of the Loyalists in other parts of Ireland: the powers and duration of such Provisional Government to come into operation on the day of the passage of any Home Rule Bill, to remain in force until Ulster shall again resume unimpaired her citizenship in the United Kingdom."

At the luncheon given by Lord Londonderry after this business conference, Carson took occasion to refer to a particularly contemptible slander to which currency had been given some days previously by Sir John Benn, one of the Eighty Club strolling seekers after truth. It was perhaps hardly worth while to notice a statement so silly as that the Ulster leader had been ready a few weeks previously to betray Ulster in order to save the House of Lords, but Carson did not yet realise the degree to which he had already won the confidence of his followers; moreover, the incident proved useful as an opportunity of emphasising the uninterrupted mutual confidence between Lord Londonderry and himself, in spite of their divergence of opinion over the Parliament Bill. It also gave those present a glimpse of their leader's power of shrivelling meanness with a few caustic drops of scorn.

The proceedings at Craigavon and at the Conference naturally created a sensation on both sides of the Channel. They brought the question of Ireland once more, for the first time since 1895, into the forefront of British politics. The House of Commons might spend the autumn ploughing its way through the intricacies of the National Insurance Bill, but everyone knew that the last and bitterest battle against Home Rule was now approaching. And, now that the Parliament Act was safely on the Statute-book,

Ministers had no further interest in concealment. During the elections, from which alone they could procure authority for legislation of so fundamental a character, Mr. Asquith, as we have seen, regarded any inquiry as to his intentions as "confusing the issue." But now that he had the constituencies in his pocket for five years and nothing further was to be feared from that quarter, his cards were placed on the table.

On the 3rd of October Mr. Winston Churchill told his followers at Dundee that the Government would introduce a Home Rule Bill next session "and press it forward with all their strength," and he added the characteristic injunction that "they must not take Sir Edward Carson too seriously." But that advice did not prevent Mr. Herbert Samuel, another member of the Cabinet, from putting in an appearance in Belfast four days later, where he threw himself into a ludicrously unequal combat with Carson, exerting himself to calm the fears of business men as to the effect of Home Rule on their prosperity; while, in the same week, Carson himself, at a great Unionist demonstration in Dublin, described the growth of Irish prosperity in the last twenty years as "almost a fairy tale," which would be cut short by Home Rule. On the 19th of the same month Mr. Birrell, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, in a speech at Ilfracombe, gave some scraps of meagre information in regard to the provisions that would be included in the coming Home Rule Bill; and on the 21st Mr. Redmond announced that the drafting of the Bill was almost completed, and that the measure would be "satisfactory to Nationalists both in principle and detail." [1]

So the autumn of 1911 wore through—Ministers doling out snippets of information; members of Parliament and the Press urging them to give more. The people of Ulster, on the other hand, were not worrying over details. They did not require to be told that the principle would be "satisfactory to Nationalists," for they knew that the Government had to "toe the line"; nor were they in doubt that what was satisfactory to Nationalists must

[1] *Annual Register*, 1911, p. 228.

be unsatisfactory to themselves. What they were thinking about was not what the Bill would or would not contain, but the preparations they were making to resist its operation.

A day or two after Craigavon the leader spoke at a great meeting in Portrush, after receiving, at every important station he passed *en route* from Belfast, enthusiastic addresses expressing confidence in himself and approval of the Craigavon declaration; and in this speech he considerably amplified what he had said at Craigavon. After explaining how the whole outlook had been changed by the Parliament Act, which cut them off from appeal to the sympathies of Englishmen, he pointed out to his hearers the only course now open to them, namely, that resolved upon at Craigavon.

"Some people," he continued, "say that I am preaching disorder. No, in the course I am advising I am preaching order, because I believe that, unless we are in a position ourselves to take over the government of those places we are able to control, the people of Ulster, if let loose without that organisation, and without that organised determination, might in a foolish moment find themselves in a condition of antagonism and grips with their foes which I believe even the present Government would lament. And therefore I say that the course we recommend—and it has been solemnly adopted by your four hundred representatives, after mature discussion in which every man understood what it was he was voting about—is the only course that I know of that is possible under the circumstances of this Province which is consistent with the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of bloodshed."

Superficially, these words may appear boldly paradoxical; but in fact they were prophetic, for the closest observers of the events of the next three years, familiar with Irish character and conditions, were in no doubt whatever that it was the disciplined organisation of the Ulster Unionists alone that prevented the outbreak of serious disorders in the North. There was, on the contrary, a diminution even of ordinary crime, accompanied

by a marked improvement in the general demeanour, and especially in the sobriety, of the people.

The speaker then touched upon a question which naturally arose out of the Craigavon policy of resistance to Home Rule. He had been asked, he said, whether Ulster proposed to fight against the forces of the Crown. He had already contrasted their own methods with those of the Nationalists, saying that Ulstermen would never descend to action "from behind hedges or by maiming cattle, or by boycotting of individuals"; he now added that they were "not going to fight the Army and the Navy . . . God forbid that any loyal Irishman should ever shoot or think of shooting the British soldier or sailor. But, believe me, any Government will ponder long before it dares to shoot a loyal Ulster Protestant, devoted to his country and loyal to his King."

In newspaper reports of public meetings, sayings of pith and moment are often attributed to "A Voice" from the audience. On this occasion, when Sir Edward Carson referred to the Army and the Navy, "A Voice" cried "They are on our side." It was the truth, as subsequent events were to show. It would indeed have been strange had it been otherwise. Men wearing His Majesty's uniform, who had been quartered at one time in Belfast or Carrickfergus and at another in Cork or Limerick, could be under no illusion as to where that uniform was held in respect and where it was scorned. The certainty that the reality of their own loyalty was understood by the men who served the King was a sustaining thought to Ulstermen through these years of trial.

This Portrush speech cleared the air. It made known the *modus operandi*, as Craigavon had made known the policy. Henceforward Ulster Unionists had a definite idea of what was before them, and they had already unbounded confidence both in the sagacity and in the courage of the man who had become their leader.

The Craigavon meeting led, almost by accident as it were, to a development the importance of which was hardly foreseen at the time. Among the processionists who passed through Captain Craig's grounds there was a

contingent of Orangemen from County Tyrone who attracted general attention by their smart appearance and the orderly precision of their marching. On inquiry it was learnt that these men had of their own accord been learning military drill. The spirit of emulation naturally suggested to others to follow the example of the Tyrone Lodges. It was soon followed, not by Orangemen alone, but by members of the Unionist Clubs, very many of whom belonged to no Orange Lodge. Within a few months drilling—of an elementary kind, it is true—had become popular in many parts of the country. Colonel R. H. Wallace, C.B., who had served with distinction in the South African War, where he commanded the 5th Royal Irish Rifles, was a prominent member of the Orange Institution, in which he was in 1911 Grand Master of the Belfast Lodges, and Grand Secretary of the Provincial Grand Orange Lodge of Ulster; and, being a man of marked ability and widespread popularity, his influence was powerful and extensive. He was a devoted adherent of Carson, and there was no keener spirit among the Ulster Loyalist leaders. Colonel Wallace was among the first to perceive the importance of this military drilling that was taking place throughout Ulster, and through his leading position in the Orange Institution his encouragement did much to extend the practice.

Having been a lawyer by profession before South Africa called him to serve his country in arms, Wallace was careful to ascertain how the law stood with regard to the drilling that was going on. He consulted Mr. James Campbell (afterwards Lord Chancellor of Ireland), who advised that any two Justices of the Peace had power to authorise drill and other military exercises within the area of their jurisdiction on certain conditions. The terms of the application made by Colonel Wallace himself to two Belfast magistrates show what the conditions were, and, under the circumstances of the time, are not without a flavour of humour. The request stated that Wallace and another officer of the Belfast Grand Lodge were—

"Authorised on behalf of the members thereof to apply for lawful authority to them to hold meetings of the

members of the said Lodge and the Lodges under its jurisdiction for the purpose of training and drilling themselves and of being trained and drilled to the use of arms, and for the purpose of practising military exercises, movements, and evolutions. And we are authorised, on their behalf, to give their assurance that they desire this authority as faithful subjects of His Majesty the King, and their undertaking that such authority is sought and will be used by them only to make them more efficient citizens for the purpose of maintaining the constitution of the United Kingdom as now established and protecting their rights and liberties thereunder."

The *bona fides* of an application couched in these terms, which followed well-established precedent, could not be questioned by any loyal subject of His Majesty. The purpose for which the licence was requested was stated with literal exactness and without subterfuge. There was nothing seditious or revolutionary in it, and the desire of men to make themselves more efficient citizens for maintaining the established government of their country, and their rights and liberties under it, was surely not merely innocent of offence, but praiseworthy.

Such, at all events, was the view taken by numbers of strictly conscientious holders of the Commission of the Peace throughout Ulster, with the result that the Ulster Volunteer Force sprang into existence within a few months without the smallest violation of the law. Originating in the Orange Lodges and the Unionist Clubs, it soon enrolled large numbers of men outside both those organisations. Men with military experience interested themselves in training the volunteers in their districts; the local bodies were before long drawn into a single coherent organisation on a territorial basis, which soon gave rise to an *esprit de corps* leading to friendly rivalry in efficiency between the local battalions.

This Ulster Volunteer Force had as yet no arms in their hands, but, as the first act of the Liberal Government on coming into power in 1906 had been to drop the " coercion " Act which prohibited the importation of firearms into Ireland, there was no reason why, in the course of time, the U.V.F. should not be fully armed with as complete an

avoidance of illegality as that with which in the meantime they were acquiring some knowledge of military duties. But for the present they had to be content with wooden "dummy" rifles with which to learn their drill, an expedient which, as will be seen later on, excited the derisive mirth of the English Radical Press.

The application to the Belfast Justices for leave to drill the Orange Lodges was dated the 5th of January, 1912. For some months both before and after that date the formation of new battalions proceeded rapidly, so that by the summer of 1912 the force was of considerable strength and decent efficiency; but already in the autumn of 1911 it soon became apparent that the existence of such a force would give a backing to the Craigavon policy which nothing else could provide. At Craigavon the leader of the movement had foreshadowed the possibility of having to take charge of the government of those districts which the Loyalists could control. The U.V.F. made such control a practical proposition, and the consciousness of this throughout Ulster gave a solid reality to the movement which it must otherwise have lacked.

The special Commission of Five set to work immediately after the Craigavon meeting to carry out the task entrusted to them by the Council. But, as more than two years must elapse before the Home Rule Bill could become law under the Parliament Act, there was no immediate urgency in making arrangements for setting up the Provisional Government resolved upon by the Council on the 25th of September, 1911, and the outside public heard nothing about what was being done in the matter for many months to come.

Meantime the Ulster Loyalists watched with something akin to dismay the dissensions in the Unionist party in England over the question of Tariff Reform, which made impossible a united front against the revived attack on the Union, and woefully weakened the effective force of the Opposition both in Parliament and the country. Public opinion was diverted from the one thing that really mattered—had Englishmen been able to realise it—from an Imperial standpoint, no less than from the standpoint

of Irish Loyalists. On the 8th of November, 1911, mainly in consequence of these dissensions, Mr. Balfour resigned the leadership of the Unionist Party. This event was regarded in Ulster as a calamity. Mr. Balfour was the ablest and most zealous living defender of the Union, and the great services he had rendered to the country during his memorable Chief Secretaryship were not forgotten. Ulstermen, in whose eyes the tariff question was of very subordinate importance, feared that no one could be found to take command of the Unionist forces comparable with the Achilles who, as they supposed, was now retiring to his tent.

What happened in regard to the vacant leadership is well known—how Mr. Walter Long and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, after presenting themselves for a day or two as rival candidates, patriotically agreed to stand aside and give united support to Mr. Bonar Law in order to avoid a division in the ranks of the party. It is less generally known that Mr. Bonar Law, before consenting to his name being proposed, wrote and asked Sir Edward Carson if he would accept the leadership, and that it was only when he received an emphatic reply in the negative that he assumed the responsibility himself. If this had been known at the time in Ulster there can be little doubt that consternation would have been caused by the refusal of their own leader to place himself at the head of the whole Unionist Party. It is quite certain that Sir Edward Carson would have been acceptable to the party meeting at the Carlton Club, for he was then much better known to the party both in the House of Commons and in the country than was Mr. Bonar Law, whose great qualities as parliamentarian and statesman had not yet been revealed; but it is not less certain that, if his first thought was to be of service to Ulster, Carson acted wisely in maintaining a position of independence, in which all his powers could continue to be concentrated on a single aim of statecraft.

At all events, the new leader of the Unionist Party was not long in proving that the Ulster cause had suffered no set-back by the change, and his constant and courageous

backing of the Ulster leader won him the unstinted admiration and affection of every Irish Loyalist. Mr. Balfour also soon showed that he was no sulking Achilles; his loyalty to the Unionist cause was undimmed; he never for a moment acted, as a meaner man might, as if his successor were a supplanter; and within the next few months he many times rose from beside Mr. Bonar Law in the House of Commons to deliver some of the best speeches he ever made on the question of Irish Government, full of cogent and crushing criticism of the Home Rule proposals of Mr. Asquith.

CHAPTER VI

MR. CHURCHILL IN BELFAST

At the women's meeting at the Ulster Hall on the 18th of January, 1912,[1] Lord Londonderry took occasion to recall once more to the memory of his audience the celebrated speech delivered by Lord Randolph Churchill in the same building twenty-six years before. That clarion was, indeed, in no danger of being forgotten; but there happened at that particular moment to be a very special reason for Ulstermen to remember it, and the incident which was present in Londonderry's mind—a Resolution passed by the Standing Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council two days earlier—proved to be so distinct a turning-point in the history of Ulster's stand for the Union that it claims more than a passing mention.

"Diligence and vigilance should be your watchword, so that the blow, if it is coming, may not come upon you as a thief in the night, and may not find you unready and taken by surprise." Such had been Lord Randolph's warning. It was now learnt, with feelings in which disgust and indignation were equally mingled, that Lord Randolph's son was bent on coming to Belfast, not indeed as a thief in the night, but with challenging audacity, to give his countenance, encouragement, and support to the adherents of disloyalty whom Lord Randolph had told Ulster to resist to the death. And not only was he coming to Belfast; he was coming to the Ulster Hall—to the very building which his father's oration had, as it were, consecrated to the Unionist cause, and which had come to be regarded as almost a loyalist shrine.

It is no doubt difficult for those who are unfamiliar with the psychology of the North of Ireland to understand the anger which this projected visit of Mr. Winston

[1] See *ante*, p. 38.

Churchill aroused in Belfast. His change of political allegiance from the party which his father had so brilliantly served and led, to the party which his father had so pitilessly chastised, was of course displeasing to Conservatives everywhere. Politicians who leave their friends to join their opponents are never popular with those they abandon, and Mr. Winston Churchill was certainly no exception. But such desertions, after the first burst of wrath has evaporated, are generally accepted with a philosophic shrug in what journalists call "political circles" in London, where plenty of precedents for lapses from party virtue can be quoted. In the provinces, even in England, resentment dies down less easily, and forgiveness is of slow growth; but in Ulster, where a political creed is held with a religious fervour, or, as a hostile critic might put it, with an intolerance unknown in England, and where the dividing line between "loyalty" and "disloyalty" is regarded almost as a matter of faith, the man who passes from the one to the other arouses the same bitterness of anger and contempt which soldiers feel for a deserter in face of the enemy.

To such sentiments there was added, in the case of Mr. Winston Churchill, a shocked feeling that his appearance in the Ulster Hall as an emissary of Home Rule would be an act not only of political apostasy but of filial impiety. The prevailing sentiment in Belfast at the time was expressed somewhat brutally, perhaps, in the local Press—"he is coming to dance on his father's coffin." It was an outrage on their feelings which the people of Belfast could not and would not tolerate. If Mr. Churchill was determined to flaunt the green flag let him find a more suitable site than the very citadel in which they had been exhorted by his father to keep the Union Jack flying to the last.

If anything could have added to the anger excited by this announcement it would have been the fact that the Cabinet Minister was to be accompanied on the platform of the Ulster Hall by Mr. Redmond and Mr. Devlin, and that Lord Pirrie was to be his chairman. There was no more unpopular citizen of Belfast than Lord Pirrie; and the reason was neatly explained to English readers by the

Special Correspondent of *The Times*. "Lord Pirrie," he wrote, "deserted Unionism about the time the Liberals acceded to power, and soon afterwards was made a Peer; whether *propter hoc* or only *post hoc* I am quite unable to say, though no Ulster Unionist has any doubts on the subject."[1] But that was not quite the whole reason. That Lord Pirrie was an example of apostasy "just for a riband to stick in his coat," was the general belief; but it was also resented that a man who had amassed, not "a handful of silver," but an enormous fortune, through a trade created by an eminent Unionist firm, and under conditions brought about in Belfast by the Union with Great Britain, should have kicked away the ladder by which he had climbed from obscurity to wealth and rank. An additional cause of offence, moreover, was that he was at that time trying to persuade credulous people in England that there was in Ulster a party of Liberals and Protestant Home Rulers, of which he posed as leader, although everyone on the spot knew that the "party" would not fill a tramcar. Of this party the same Correspondent of *The Times* very truly said:

"Nearly every prominent man in it has received an office or a decoration—and the fact that, with all the power of patronage in their hands for the last six years, the Government had been able to make so small an inroad into the solid square of Ulster Unionism is a remarkable testimony to the strength of the sentiment which gives it cohesion."

But a score of individuals in possession of an office equipped with stamped stationery, and with a titled chairman of fabulous wealth, have no difficulty in deluding strangers at a distance into the belief that they are an influential and representative body of men. It was in furtherance of the scheme for creating this false impression across the Channel that Lord Pirrie and his so-called "Ulster Liberal Association" invited Mr. Winston Churchill and the two Nationalist leaders to speak in the Ulster Hall on the 8th of February, 1912, and that the

[1] *The Times*, January 18th, 1912.

announcement of the fixture was made in the Press some three weeks earlier.

The Unionist leaders were not long left in ignorance of the public excitement which this news created in the city. A specially summoned meeting of the Standing Committee, with Londonderry in the chair, was held on the 16th of January to consider what action, if any, should be taken; but it was no simple matter they had to decide, especially in the absence of their leader, Sir Edward Carson, who was kept in England by great Unionist meetings which he was addressing in Lancashire.

The reasons, on the one hand, for doing nothing were obvious enough. No one, of course, suggested the possibility of preventing Mr. Churchill coming to Belfast; but could even the Ulster Hall itself, the Loyalist sanctuary, be preserved from the threatened desecration? It was the property of the Corporation, and the Unionist political organisation had no exclusive title to its use. The meeting could only be frustrated by force in some form, or by a combination of force and stratagem. The Standing Committee, all men of solid sense and judgment, several of whom were Privy Councillors, were very fully alive to the objections to any resort to force in such a matter. They valued freedom of speech as highly as any Englishman, and they realised the odium that interference with it might bring both on themselves and their cause; and the last thing they desired at the present crisis was to alienate public sympathy in Great Britain. The force of such considerations was felt strongly by several members, indeed by all, of the Committee, and not least by Lord Londonderry himself, whose counsel naturally carried great weight.

But, on the other hand, the danger of a passive attitude was also fully recognised. It was perfectly well understood that one of the chief desires of the Liberal Government and its followers at this time was to make the world believe that Ulster's opposition to Home Rule had declined in strength in recent years; that there really was a considerable body of Protestant opinion in agreement with Lord Pirrie, and prepared to support Home Rule on

"Liberal," if not on avowedly "Nationalist" principles, and that the policy for which Carson, Londonderry, and the Unionist Council stood was a gigantic piece of bluff which only required to be exposed to disappear in general derision.

From this point of view the Churchill meeting could only be regarded as a deliberate challenge and provocation to Ulster. It seemed probable that the First Lord of the Admiralty had been selected for the mission in preference to any other Minister precisely because he was Lord Randolph's son. All this bluster about "fight and be right" was traceable, so Liberal Ministers doubtless reasoned, to that unhappy speech of "Winston's father"; let Winston go over to the same place and explain his father away. If he obtained a hearing in the Ulster Hall in the company of Redmond, Devlin, and Pirrie the legend of Ulster as an impregnable loyalist stronghold would be wiped out, and Randolph's rant could be made to appear a foolish joke in comparison with the more mature and discriminating wisdom of Winston.

It cannot, of course, be definitely asserted that the situation was thus weighed deliberately by the Cabinet, or by Mr. Churchill himself. But, if it was not, they must have been deficient in foresight; for there can be no doubt, as several writers in the Press perceived, that the transaction would so have presented itself to the mind of the public; the psychological result would inure to the benefit of the Home Rulers.

But there was also another consideration which could not be ignored by the Standing Committee—namely, the attitude of that important individual, the "man in the street." Among the innumerable misrepresentations levelled at the Ulster Movement none was more common than that it was confined to a handful of lords, landlords, and wealthy employers of labour; and, as a corollary, that all the trouble was caused by the perversity of a few individuals, of whom the most guilty was Sir Edward Carson. The truth was very different. Even at the zenith of his influence and popularity Sir Edward himself would have been instantly disowned by the Ulster democracy if he had given away anything fundamental to

the Unionist cause. More than to anything else he owed his power to his pledge, never violated, that he would never commit his followers to any irretraceable step without the consent of the Council, in which they were fully represented on a democratic basis. At the particular crisis now reached popular feeling could not be safely disregarded, and it was clearly understood by the Standing Committee that public excitement over the coming visit of Mr. Churchill was only being kept within bounds by the belief of the public that their leaders would not "let them down."

All these considerations were most carefully balanced at the meeting on the 16th of January, and there were prolonged deliberations before the decision was arrived at that some action must be taken to prevent the Churchill meeting being held in the Ulster Hall, but that no obstacle could, of course, be made to his speaking in any other building in Belfast. The further question as to what this action should be was under discussion when Colonel R. H. Wallace, C.B., Grand Master of the Belfast Orangemen, and a man of great influence with all classes in the city as well as in the neighbouring counties, entered the room and told the Committee that people outside were expecting the Unionist Council to devise means for stopping the Ulster Hall meeting; that they were quite resolved to take matters into their own hands if the Council remained passive; and that, in his judgment, the result in that event would probably be very serious disorder and bloodshed, and the loss of all control over the Unionist rank and file by their leaders.

This information arrived too late to influence the decision on the main question, but it confirmed its wisdom and set at rest the doubts which some of the Committee had at first entertained. It was reported at the time that there had been a dissenting minority consisting of Lord Londonderry, Mr. Sinclair, and Mr. John Young, the last-mentioned being a Privy Councillor, a trusted leader of the Presbyterians, and a man of moderate views whose great influence throughout the north-eastern counties was due to his high character and the soundness of his judgment. There was, however, no truth in this report, which

Londonderry publicly contradicted; but it is probable that the concurrence of the men mentioned, and perhaps of others, was owing to their well-founded conviction that the course decided upon, however high-handed it might appear to onlookers at a distance, was in reality the only means of averting much more deplorable consequences.

On the following day, January 17th, an immense sensation was created by the publication of the Resolution which had been unanimously adopted on the motion of Captain James Craig, M.P. It was:

"That the Standing Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council observes with astonishment the deliberate challenge thrown down by Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. John Redmond, Mr. Joseph Devlin, and Lord Pirrie in announcing their intention to hold a Home Rule meeting in the centre of the loyal city of Belfast, and resolves to take steps to prevent its being held."

There was an immediate outpouring of vituperation by the Ministerial Press in England, as had been anticipated by the Standing Committee. Special Correspondents trooped over to Belfast, whence they filled their papers with telegrams, articles, and interviews, ringing the changes on the audacity of this unwarranted interference with freedom of speech, and speculating as to the manner in which the threat was likely to be carried out. Scribes of "Open Letters" had a fine opportunity to display their gift of insolent invective. Cartoonists and caricaturists had a time of rare enjoyment, and let their pencils run riot. Writers in the Liberal Press for the most part assumed that Mr. Churchill would bid defiance to the Ulster Unionist Council; others urged him to do so and to fulfil his engagement; some, with more prudence, suggested that he might be extricated from the difficulty without loss of dignity if the Chief Secretary would prohibit the meeting, as likely to produce a breach of peace, and it was pointed out that Dublin Castle would certainly forbid a meeting in Tipperary organised by the Ulster Unionist Council, with Sir Edward Carson as principal speaker.

However, on the 25th of January Mr. Churchill addressed a letter, dated from the Admiralty, to Lord

Londonderry at Mount Stewart, in which he said he was prepared to give up the idea of speaking in the Ulster Hall, and would arrange for his meeting to be held elsewhere in the city, as "it was not a point of any importance to him where he spoke in Belfast." He did not explain why, if that were the case, he had ever made a plan that so obviously constituted a direct premeditated challenge to Ulster. Lord Londonderry, in his reply, said that the Ulster Unionist Council had no intention of interfering with any meeting Mr. Churchill might arrange "outside the districts which passionately resent your action," but that, "having regard to the intense state of feeling" which had been aroused, the Council could accept no responsibility for anything that might occur during the visit.

Mr. Churchill's prudent change of plan relieved the extreme tension of the situation, and there was much speculation as to what influence had produced a result so satisfactory to the Ulster Unionist Council. The truth seems to be that the Council's Resolution had impaled the Government on the horns of a very awkward dilemma, completely turning the tables on Ministers, whose design had been to compel the Belfast Unionists either to adopt, on the one hand, an attitude of apparent intolerance which would put them in the wrong in the eyes of the British public, or, on the other, to submit to the flagrant misrepresentation of their whole position which would be the outcome of a Nationalist meeting in the Ulster Hall presided over by the President of the illusory "Ulster Liberal Association," and with Lord Randolph Churchill's son as the protagonist of Home Rule. The threat to stop the meeting forced the Government to consider how the First Lord of the Admiralty and his friends were to be protected and enabled to fulfil their programme. The Irish Executive, according to the Dublin Correspondent of *The Times*, objected to the employment of troops for this purpose; because—

"If the Belfast Unionists decided to resist the soldiers, bloodshed and disorder on a large scale must have ensued. If, on the other hand, they yielded to the *force majeure* of British bayonets, and Mr. Churchill was enabled to speak

in the Ulster Hall, they would still have carried their point; they would have proved to the English people that Home Rule could only be thrust upon Ulster by an overwhelming employment of military force. The Executive preferred to depend on the services of a large police force. And this meant that Mr. Churchill could not speak in the Ulster Hall; for the Belfast democracy, though it might yield to soldiers, would certainly offer a fierce resistance to the police. It seemed, therefore, that the Government's only safe and prudent course was to prevent Mr. Churchill from trying to speak in that Hall." [1]

The Government, in fact, had been completely outmanœuvred. They had given the Ulster Unionist Council an opportunity to show its own constituents and the outside world that, where the occasion demanded action, it could act with decision; and they had failed utterly to drive a wedge between Ulster and the Unionist Party in England and in the South of Ireland, as they hoped to do by goading Belfast into illegality. On the other hand, they had aroused some misgiving in the ranks of their own supporters. A political observer in London reported that the incident had—

"Caused a feeling of considerable apprehension in Radical circles. The pretence that Ulster does not mean to fight is now almost abandoned even by the most fanatical Home Rulers." [2]

Unionist journals in Great Britain, almost without exception, applauded the conduct of the Council, and proved by their comments that they understood its motive, and sympathised with the feelings of Ulster. *The Saturday Review* expressed the general view when it wrote:

"With the indignation of the loyal Ulstermen at this proposal we are in complete sympathy. Where there is a question of Home Rule, the Ulster Hall is sacred ground, and to the Ulster mind and, indeed, to the mind of any calm outsider, there is something both impudent and impious in the proposal that this temple of Unionism

[1] *The Times*, January 26th, 1912.
[2] *The Standard*, January 18th, 1912.

should be profaned by the son of a man who assisted at its consecration." [1]

The southern Unionists of Ireland thoroughly appreciated the difficulty that had confronted their friends in the North, and approved the way it had been met. This was natural enough, since, as the Dublin Correspondent of *The Times* pointed out—

" They understand Ulster's position better than it can be understood in England. They realise that the provocation has been extreme. There has been a deliberate conspiracy to persuade the English people, first, that Ulster is weakening in its opposition to Home Rule; and, next, that its declared refusal to accept Home Rule in any form is mere bluff. It became necessary for Ulster to defeat this conspiracy, and the Ulster Council's Resolution has defeated it." [2]

A few days later a still more valuable token of sympathy and support from across the Channel gave fresh encouragement to Ulster. On the 26th of January Mr. Bonar Law made his first public speech as leader of the Unionist Party, when he addressed an audience of ten thousand people in the Albert Hall in London. In the course of a masterly analysis of the dangers inseparable from Home Rule, he once more drew attention to " the dishonesty with which the Government hid Home Rule before the election, and now propose to carry it after the election "; but the passage which gave the greatest satisfaction in Ulster was that in which, speaking for the whole Unionist Party—which meant at least half, and probably more than half, the British nation—Mr. Bonar Law, in reference to the recent occurrence in Belfast, said:

" We hear a great deal about the intolerance of Ulster. It is easy to be tolerant for other people. We who represent the Unionist Party in England and Scotland have supported, and we mean to support to the end, the loyal minority. We support them not because we are intolerant, but because their claims are just."

[1] *The Saturday Review*, January 27th, 1912.
[2] *The Times*, January 20th, 1912.

Meanwhile, Mr. Churchill's friends were seeking a building in Belfast where the baffled Minister could hold his meeting on the 8th of February, and in the course of the search the director of the Belfast Opera-house was offered a knighthood as well as a large sum of money for the use of his theatre,[1] a fact that possibly explains the statement made by the London Correspondent of *The Freeman's Journal* on the 28th of January, that the Government's Chief Whip and Patronage Secretary was busying himself with the arrangement.[2] Captain Frederick Guest, M.P., one of the junior whips, arrived in Belfast on the 25th to give assistance on the spot; but no suitable hall with an auspicious *genius loci* could apparently be found, for eventually a marquee was imported from Scotland and erected on the Celtic football ground, in the Nationalist quarter of the city.

The question of maintaining order on the day of the meeting was at the same time engaging the attention both of the Government in Dublin and the Unionist Council in Belfast. The former decided to strengthen the garrison of Belfast by five battalions of infantry and two squadrons of cavalry, while at the Old Town Hall anxious consultations were held as to the best means of securing that the soldiers should have nothing to do. The Unionist leaders had not yet gained the full influence they were able to exercise later, nor were their followers as disciplined as they afterwards became. The Orange Lodges were the only section of the population in any sense under discipline; and this section was a much smaller proportion of the Unionist rank and file than English Liberals supposed, who were in the habit of speaking as if "Orangemen" were a correct cognomen of the whole Protestant population of Ulster. It was, however, only through the Lodges and the Unionist Clubs that the Standing Committee could hope to exert influence in keeping the peace. That Committee, accordingly, passed a Resolution on the 5th of February, moved by Colonel Wallace, the most influential

[1] See Interview with Mr. F. W. Warden in *The Standard*, February 8th, 1912.

[2] See Dublin Correspondent's telegram in *The Times*, January 29th, 1912.

of the Belfast Orangemen, which "strongly urged all Unionists," in view of the Ulster Hall victory, "to abstain from any interference with the meeting at the Celtic football ground, and to do everything in their power to avoid any action that might lead to any disturbance."

The Resolution was circulated to all the Orange Lodges and Unionist Clubs in Belfast and the neighbouring districts—for it was expected that some 30,000 or 40,000 people might come into the city from outside on the day of the meeting—with urgent injunctions to the officers to bring it to the notice of all members; it was also extensively placarded on all the hoardings of Belfast. Of even greater importance perhaps, in the interests of peace, was the decision that Carson and Londonderry should themselves remain in Belfast on the 8th. This, as *The Times* Correspondent in Belfast had the insight to observe, was "the strongest guarantee of order" that could be given, and there is no doubt that their appearance, together with Captain Craig, M.P., and Lord Templetown, on the balcony of the Ulster Club had a calming effect on the excited crowd that surged round Mr. Churchill's hotel, and served as a reminder throughout the day of the advice which these leaders had issued to their adherents.

The First Lord of the Admiralty was accompanied to Belfast by Mrs. Churchill, his Secretary, and two Liberal Members of Parliament, Mr. Fiennes and Mr. Hamar Greenwood—for the last-mentioned of whom fate was reserving a more intimate connection with Irish trouble than could be got from a fleeting flirtation with disloyalty in West Belfast. They were greeted at Larne by a large crowd vociferously cheering Carson, and singing the National Anthem. A still larger concourse of people, though it could not be more hostile, awaited Mr. Churchill at the Midland Station in Belfast and along the route to the Grand Central Hotel. When he started from the hotel early in the afternoon for the football field the crowd in Royal Avenue was densely packed and actively demonstrating its unfavourable opinion of the distinguished visitor; on whom, however, none desired or attempted to inflict any physical injury, although the involuntary

swaying of so great a mass of men was in danger for a moment of overturning the motor-car in which he and his wife were seated.

The way to the meeting took the Minister from the Unionist to the Nationalist district and afforded him a practical demonstration of the gulf between the "two nations" which he and his colleagues were bent upon treating as one. The moment he crossed the boundary, the booing and groaning of one area was succeeded by enthusiastic cheers in the other; grotesque effigies of Redmond and of himself in one street were replaced by equally unflattering effigies of Londonderry and Carson in the next; in Royal Avenue both men and women looked like tearing him in pieces, in Falls Road they thronged so close to shake his hand that "Mr. Hamar Greenwood found it necessary" (so the *Times* Correspondent reported) "to stand on the footboard outside the car and relieve the pressure."

It was expected that Mr. Churchill would return to his hotel after the meeting, and there had been no shrinkage in the crowd in the interval, nor any change in its sentiments. The police decided that it would be wiser for him to depart by another route. He was therefore taken by back streets to the Midland terminus, and without waiting for the ordinary train by which he had arranged to travel, was as hastily as possible despatched to Larne by a special train before it was generally known that Royal Avenue and York Street were to see him no more. Mr. Churchill tells us in his brilliant biography of his father that when Lord Randolph arrived at Larne in 1886 "he was welcomed like a King." His own arrival at the same port was anything but regal, and his departure more resembled that of the "thief in the night," of whom Lord Randolph had bidden Ulster beware.

So this memorable pilgrimage ended. Of the speech itself which Mr. Churchill delivered to some thousands of Nationalists, many of whom were brought by special train from Dublin, it is unnecessary here to say more than that Sir Edward Carson described it a few days later as a "speech full of eloquent platitudes," and that

it certainly did little to satisfy the demand for information about the Home Rule Bill which was to be produced in the coming session of Parliament.

The undoubted importance which this visit of Mr. Churchill to Belfast and its attendant circumstances had in the development of the Ulster Movement is the justification for treating it in what may appear to be disproportionate detail. From it dates the first clear realisation even by hostile critics in England, and probably by Ministers themselves, that the policy of Ulster as laid down at Craigavon could not be dismissed with a sneer, although it is true that there were many Home Rulers who never openly abandoned the pretence that it could. Not less important was the effect in Ulster itself. The Unionist Council had proved itself in earnest; it could, and was prepared to, do more than organise imposing political demonstrations; and so the rank and file gained confidence in leaders who could act as well as make speeches, and who had shown themselves in an emergency to be in thorough accord with popular sentiment; the belief grew that the men who met in the Old Town Hall would know how to handle any crisis that might arise, would not timidly shrink from acting as occasion might require, and were quite able to hold their own with the Government in tactical manœuvres. This confidence improved discipline. The Lodges and the Clubs and the general body of shipyard and other workers had less temptation to take matters into their own hands; they were content to wait for instructions from headquarters now that they could trust their leaders to give the necessary instructions at the proper time.

The net result, therefore, of an expedition which was designed to expose the hollowness and the weakness of the Ulster case was to augment the prestige of the Ulster leaders and the self-confidence of the Ulster people, and to make both leaders and followers understand better than before the strength of the position in which they were entrenched.

CHAPTER VII

"WHAT ANSWER FROM THE NORTH?"

PUBLIC curiosity as to the proposals that the coming Home Rule Bill might contain was not set at rest by Mr. Churchill's oration in Belfast. The constitution-mongers were hard at work with suggestions. Attempts were made to conciliate hesitating opinion by representing Irish Home Rule as a step in the direction of a general federal system for the United Kingdom, and by tracing an analogy with the constitutions already granted to the self-governing Dominions. Closely connected with the federal idea was the question of finance. There was lively speculation as to what measure of control over taxation the Bill would confer on the Irish Parliament, and especially whether it would be given the power to impose duties of Customs and Excise. Home Rulers themselves were sharply divided on the question. At a conference held at the London School of Economics on the 10th of January, 1912, Professor T. M. Kettle, Mr. Erskine Childers, and Mr. Thomas Lough, M.P., declared themselves in favour of Irish fiscal autonomy, while Lord Macdonnell opposed the idea as irreconcilable with the fiscal policy of Great Britain.[1] The latter opinion was very forcibly maintained a few weeks later by a member of the Government with some reputation as an economist. Speaking to a branch of the United Irish League in London, Mr. J. M. Robertson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, summarily rejected fiscal autonomy for Ireland, which, he said, "really meant a claim for separation." "To give fiscal autonomy," he added, "would mean disintegration of the United

[1] *Annual Register*, 1912, p. 3.

Kingdom. Fiscal autonomy for Ireland put an end altogether to all talk of Federal Home Rule, and he could see no hope for a Home Rule Bill if it included fiscal autonomy." [1]

Although the Secretary to the Board of Trade was probably not in the confidence of the Cabinet, many people took Mr. Robertson's speech as an indication of the limits of financial control that the Bill would give to Ireland. On the same day that it was delivered the Dublin Correspondent of *The Times* reported that the demand of the Nationalists for control of Customs and Excise was rapidly growing, and that any Bill which withheld it, even if it could scrape through a National Convention, "would never survive the two succeeding years of agitation and criticism"; and he agreed with Mr. Robertson that if, on the other hand, fiscal autonomy should be conceded, it would destroy all prospect of a settlement on federal lines, and would "establish virtual separation between Ireland and Great Britain." He predicted that "Ulster, of course, would resist to the bitter end." [2]

Ulster, in point of fact, took but a secondary interest in the question. Her people were indeed opposed to anything that would enlarge the separation from England, or emphasise it, and, as they realised, like the Secretary to the Board of Trade, that fiscal autonomy would have this effect, they opposed fiscal autonomy; but they cared little about the thing in itself one way or the other. Nor did they greatly concern themselves whether Home Rule proceeded on federal lines or any other lines; nor whether some apt analogy could or could not be found between Ireland and the Dominions of the Crown thousands of miles oversea. Having made up their minds that no Dublin Parliament should exercise jurisdiction over themselves, they did not worry themselves much about the powers with which such a Parliament might be endowed. It is noteworthy, however, in view of the importance which the question afterwards attained, that so early as January 1912 Sir Edward Carson, speaking in Manchester, maintained that without fiscal autonomy Home Rule was

[1] *The Times*, February 3rd, 1912. [2] Ibid.

impossible,[1] and that some months later Mr. Bonar Law, in a speech at Glasgow on the 21st of May, said that if the Unionist Party were in a position where they had to concede Home Rule to Ireland they would include fiscal autonomy in the grant.[2] These leaders, who, unlike the Liberal Ministers, had some knowledge of the Irish temperament, realised from the first the absurdity of Mr. Asquith's attempt to satisfy the demands of "the rebel party" by offering something very different from what that party demanded. The Ulster leader and the leader of the Unionist Party knew as well as anybody that fiscal autonomy meant "virtual separation between Ireland and Great Britain," but they also knew that separation was the ultimate aim of Nationalist policy, and that there could be no finality in the Liberal compromise; and they no doubt agreed with the forcible language used by Mr. Balfour in the previous autumn, when he said that "the rotten hybrid system of a Parliament with municipal duties and a national feeling seemed to be the dream of political idiots."

The ferment of speculation as to the Government's intentions continued during the early weeks of the Parliamentary session, which opened on the 14th of February, but all inquiries by members of the House of Commons were met by variations on the theme "Wait and See." Unionists, however, realised that it was not in Parliament, but outside, that the only effective work could be done, in the hope of forcing a dissolution of Parliament before the Bill could become law. A vigorous campaign was conducted throughout the country, especially in Lancashire, and arrangements were made for a monster demonstration in Belfast, which should serve both as a counter-blast to the Churchill fiasco, and for enabling English and Scottish Unionists to test for themselves the temper of the Ulster resistance. In the belief that the Home Rule Bill would be introduced before Easter, it was decided to hold this meeting in the Recess, as Mr. Bonar Law had promised to speak, and a number of English Members of Parliament wished to be present. At the last moment

[1] *Annual Register*, 1912, p. 7. [2] Ibid., p. 126.

the Government announced that the Bill would not be presented till the 11th of April, after Parliament reassembled, and its provisions were therefore still unknown when the demonstration took place on the 9th in the Show Ground of the Royal Agricultural Society at Balmoral, a suburb of Belfast.

Feeling ran high as the date of the double event approached, and the indignant sense of wrong that prevailed in Ulster was finely voiced in a poem, entitled "Ulster 1912," written by Mr. Kipling for the occasion which appeared in *The Morning Post* on the day of the Balmoral demonstration, of which the first and last stanzas were:

"The dark eleventh hour
Draws on, and sees us sold
To every evil Power
We fought against of old.
Rebellion, rapine, hate,
Oppression, wrong, and greed
Are loosed to rule our fate,
By England's act and deed.

"Believe, we dare not boast,
Believe, we do not fear—
We stand to pay the cost
In all that men hold dear.
What answer from the North?
One Law, One Land, One Throne.
If England drive us forth
We shall not fall alone!"

The preparations for the Unionist leader's coming visit to Belfast had excited the keenest interest throughout England and Scotland. Coinciding as it did with the introduction of the Government's Bill, it was recognised to be the formal countersigning by the whole Unionist Party of Great Britain of Ulster's proclamation of her determination to resist her forcible degradation in constitutional status. The same note of mingled reproach and defiance which sounded in Kipling's verses was heard in the grave warning addressed by *The Times* to the country in a leading article on the morning of the meeting:

"Nobody of common judgment and common knowledge of political movements can honestly doubt the exceptional

gravity of the occasion, and least of all can any such doubt be felt by any who know the men of Ulster. To make light of the deep-rooted convictions which fill the minds of those who will listen to Mr. Bonar Law to-day is a shallow and an idle affectation, or a token of levity and of ignorance. Enlightened Liberalism may smile at the beliefs and the passions of the Ulster Protestants, but it was those same beliefs and passions, in the forefathers of the men who will gather in Belfast to-day, which saved Ireland for the British Crown, and freed the cause of civil and religious liberty in these islands from its last dangerous foes. . . . It is useless to argue that they are mistaken. They have reasons, never answered yet, for believing that they are not mistaken. . . . Their temper is an ultimate fact which British statesmen and British citizens have to face. These men cannot be persuaded to submit to Home Rule. Are Englishmen and Scotchmen prepared to fasten it upon them by military force? That is the real Ulster question."

Other great English newspapers wrote in similar strain, and the support thus given was of the greatest possible encouragement to the Ulster people, who were thereby assured that their standpoint was not misunderstood and that the justice of their "loyalist" claims was appreciated across the Channel.

Among the numberless popular demonstrations which marked the history of Ulster's stand against Home Rule, four stand out pre-eminent in the impressiveness of their size and character. Those who attended the Ulster Convention of 1892 were persuaded that no political meeting could ever be more inspiring; but many of them lived to acknowledge that it was far surpassed at Craigavon in 1911. The Craigavon meeting, though in some respects as important as any of the series, was, from a spectacular point of view, much less imposing than the assemblage which listened to Mr. Bonar Law at Balmoral on Easter Tuesday, 1912; and the latter occasion, though never surpassed in splendour and magnitude by any single gathering, was in significance but a prelude to the magnificent climax reached in the following September on the day when the Covenant was signed throughout Ulster.

The Balmoral demonstration had, however, one distinctive feature. At it the Unionist Party of Great Britain met and grasped the hand of Ulster Loyalism. It gave the leader and a large number of his followers an opportunity to judge for themselves the strength and sincerity of Ulster, and at the same time it served to show the Ulstermen the weight of British opinion ready to back them. Mr. Bonar Law was accompanied to Belfast by no less than seventy Members of Parliament, representing English, Scottish, and Welsh constituencies, not a few of whom had already attained, or afterwards rose to, political distinction. Among them were Mr. Walter Long, Lord Hugh Cecil, Sir Robert Finlay, Lord Charles Beresford, Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Amery, Mr. J. D. Baird, Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, Mr. Ian Malcolm, Lord Claud Hamilton, Mr. J. G. Butcher, Mr. Ernest Pollock, Mr. George Cave, Mr. Felix Cassel, Mr. Ormsby-Gore, Mr. Scott Dickson, Mr. W. Peel, Captain Gilmour, Mr. George Lloyd, Mr. J. W. Hills, Mr. George Lane-Fox, Mr. Stuart-Wortley, Mr. J. F. P. Rawlinson, Mr. H. J. Mackinder, and Mr. Herbert Nield.

The reception of the Unionist Leader at Larne on Easter Monday was wonderful, even to those who knew what a Larne welcome to loyalist leaders could be, and who recalled the scenes there during the historic visits of Lord Randolph Churchill, Lord Salisbury, and Mr. Balfour. "If this is how you treat your friends," said Mr. Bonar Law simply, in reply to one of the innumerable addresses presented to him, "I am glad I am not an enemy." Before reaching Belfast he had ample opportunity at every stopping-place of his train to note the fervour of the populace. "Are all these people landlords?" he asked (in humorous allusion to the Liberal legend that Ulster Unionism was manufactured by a few aristocratic landowners), as he saw every platform thronged with enthusiastic crowds of men and women, the majority of whom were evidently of the poorer classes. In Belfast the concourse of people was so dense in the streets that the motor-car in which Mr. Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson sat side by side found it difficult to make its way

to the Reform Club, the headquarters of what had once been Ulster Liberalism, where an address was presented in which it was stated that the conduct of the Government "will justify loyal Ulster in resorting to the most extreme measures in resisting Home Rule." In his reply Mr. Bonar Law gave them "on behalf of the Unionist Party this message—though the brunt of the battle will be yours, there will not be wanting help from 'across the Channel.'" At Comber, where a stop was made on the way to Mount Stewart, he asked himself how Radical Scotsmen would like to be treated as the Government were treating Protestant Ulster. "I know Scotland well," he replied to his own question, "and I believe that, rather than submit to such fate, the Scottish people would face a second Bannockburn or a second Flodden."

These few quotations from the first utterances of Mr. Bonar Law on his arrival are sufficient to show how complete was the understanding between him and the Ulster people even before the great demonstration of the following day. He had, as *The Times* Correspondent noted, "already found favour with the Belfast crowd. All the way from Larne by train to Belfast and through Belfast by motor-car to Newtownards and Mount Stewart, his progress was a triumph."

The remarks of the same experienced observer on the eve of the Balmoral meeting are worth recording, especially as his anticipations were amply fulfilled.

"To-morrow's demonstration," he telegraphed from Belfast, "both in numbers and enthusiasm, promises to be the most remarkable ever seen in Ireland. If expectations are realised the assemblage of men will be twice as numerous as the whole white population of the Witwatersrand, whose grievances led to the South African War, and they will represent a community greater in numbers than the white population of South Africa as a whole. Unless all the signs are misleading, it will be the demonstration of a community in the deadliest earnest. By the Protestant community of Ulster, Home Rule is regarded as a menace to their faith, to their material well-being and prosperity, and to their freedom and national traditions, and thus

all the most potent motives which in history have stirred men to their greatest efforts are here in operation."

No written description, unless by the pen of some gifted imaginative writer, could convey any true impression of the scenes that were witnessed the following day in the Show Ground at Balmoral and the roads leading to it from the heart of the city. The photographs published at the time give some idea of the apparently unbounded ocean of earnest, upturned faces, closely packed round the several platforms, and stretching away far into a dim and distant background ; but even they could not record the impressive stillness of the vast multitude, its orderliness, which required the presence of not a single policeman, its spirit of almost religious solemnity which struck every observant onlooker. No profusion of superlative adjectives can avail to reproduce such scenes, any more than words, no matter how skilfully chosen, can convey the tone of a violin in the hands of a master. Even the mere number of those who took part in the demonstration cannot be guessed with any real accuracy. There was a procession of men, whose fine physique and military smartness were noticed by visitors from England, which was reported to have taken three hours to pass a given point marching in fours, and was estimated to be not less than 100,000 strong, while those who went independently to the ground or crowded the route were reckoned to be at least as many more. The Correspondent of *The Times* declared that " it was hardly by hyperbole that Sir Edward Carson claimed that it was one of the largest assemblies in the history of the world."

But the moral effect of such gatherings is not to be gauged by numbers alone. The demeanour of the people, which no organisation or stage management could influence, impressed the English journalists and Members of Parliament even more than the gigantic scale of the demonstration. There was not a trace of the picnic spirit. There was no drunkenness, no noisy buffoonery, no unseemly behaviour. The Ulster habit of combining politics and prayer—which was not departed from at Balmoral, where the proceedings were opened by the Primate of

All Ireland and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church—was jeered at by people who never witnessed an Ulster loyalist meeting; but the Editor of *The Observer*, himself a Roman Catholic, remarked with more insight that "the Protestant mind does not use prayer simply as part of a parade;" and *The Times* Correspondent, who has already been more than once quoted, was struck by the fervour with which at Balmoral "the whole of the vast gathering joined in singing the 90th Psalm," and he added the very just comment that "it is the custom in Ulster to mark in this solemn manner the serious nature of the issue when the Union is the question, as something different from a question of mere party politics."

The spectacular aspect of the demonstration was admirably managed. A saluting point was so arranged that the procession, on entering the enclosure, could divide into two columns, one passing each side of a small pavilion where Mr. Bonar Law, Sir Edward Carson, Lord Londonderry, and Mr. Walter Long stood to take the salute before proceeding to the stand which held the principal platform for the delivery of the speeches. In the centre of the ground was a signalling-tower with a flagstaff 90 feet high, on which a Union Jack measuring 48 feet by 25 and said to be the largest ever woven, was broken at the moment when the Resolution against Home Rule was put to the meeting.

Mr. Bonar Law, visibly moved by the scene before him, made a speech that profoundly affected his audience, although it was characteristically free from rhetorical display. A recent incident in Dublin, where the sight of the British Flag flying within view of a Nationalist meeting had been denounced as "an intolerable insult," supplied him, when he compared it with the spectacle presented by the meeting, with an apt illustration of the contrast between "the two nations" in Ireland—the loyal and the disloyal. He told the Ulstermen that he had come to them as the leader of the Unionist Party to give them the assurance that "that party regard your cause, not as yours alone, nor as ours alone, but as the cause of the Empire"; the meeting, which he had expected to be a great gathering

but which far exceeded his expectation, proved that Ulster's hostility to Home Rule, far from having slackened, as enemies had alleged, had increased and solidified with the passing years; they were men "animated by a unity of purpose, by a fixity of resolution which nothing can shake and which must prove irresistible," to whom he would apply Cromwell's words to his Ironsides: "You are men who know what you are fighting for, and love what you know." Then, after an analysis of the practical evils that Home Rule would engender and the benefits which legislative union secured, he again emphasised the lack of mandate for the Government policy. His hearers, he said, "knew the shameful story": how the Radicals had twice failed to obtain the sanction of the British people for Home Rule, "and now for the third time they were trying to carry it not only without the sanction, but against the will, of the British people."

The peroration which followed made an irresistible appeal to a people always mindful of the glories of the relief of Derry. Mr. Bonar Law warned them that the Ministerial majority in the House of Commons, "now cemented by £400 a year," could not be broken up, but would have their own way. He therefore said to them:

"With all solemnity—you must trust in yourselves. Once again you hold the pass—the pass for the Empire. You are a besieged city. The timid have left you; your Lundys have betrayed you; but you have closed your gates. The Government have erected by their Parliament Act a boom against you to shut you off from the help of the British people. You will burst that boom. That help will come, and when the crisis is over men will say to you in words not unlike those used by Pitt—you have saved yourselves by your exertions and you will save the Empire by your example."

The overwhelming ovation with which Sir Edward Carson was received upon taking the president's chair at the chief platform, in the absence through illness of the Duke of Abercorn, proved that he had already won the confidence and the affection of the Ulster people to a

degree that seemed to leave little room for growth, although every subsequent appearance he made among them in the years that lay ahead seemed to add intensity to their demonstrations of personal devotion. The most dramatic moment at Balmoral—if for once the word so hackneyed and misused by journalists may be given its true signification—the most dramatic moment was when the Ulster leader and the leader of the whole Unionist Party each grasped the other's hand in view of the assembled multitude, as though formally ratifying a compact made thus publicly on the eve of battle. It was the consummation of the purpose of this assembly of the Unionist hosts on Ulster soil, and gave assurance of unity of aim and undivided command in the coming struggle.

Of the other speeches delivered, many of them of a high quality, especially, perhaps, those of Lord Hugh Cecil, Sir Robert Finlay, and Mr. Scott Dickson, it is enough to say that they all conveyed the same message of encouragement to Ulster, the same promise of undeviating support. One detail, however, deserves mention, because it shows the direction in which men's thoughts were then moving. Mr. Walter Long, whose great services to the cause of the Union procured him a welcome second in warmth to that of no other leader, after thanking Londonderry and Carson "for the great lead they have given us in recent difficult weeks"—an allusion to the Churchill incident that was not lost on the audience—added with a blunt directness characteristic of the speaker: "If they are going to put Lord Londonderry and Sir Edward Carson into the dock, they will have to find one large enough to hold the whole Unionist Party."

The Balmoral demonstration was recognised on all sides as one of the chief landmarks in the Ulster Movement. The Craigavon policy was not only reaffirmed with greater emphasis than before by the people of Ulster themselves, but it received the deliberate endorsement of the Unionist Party in England and Scotland. Moreover, as Mr. Long's speech explicitly promised, and Mr. Bonar Law's speech unmistakably implied, British support was not to be dependent on Ulster's opposition to Home Rule being

kept within strictly legal limits. Indeed, it had become increasingly evident that opposition so limited must be impotent, since, as Mr. Bonar Law pointed out, Ministers and their majority in the House of Commons were in Mr. Redmond's pocket, and had no choice but to "toe the line," while the "boom" which they had erected by the Parliament Act cut off Ulster from access to the British constituencies, unless that boom could be burst as the boom across the Foyle was broken by the *Mountjoy* in 1689. The Unionist leader had warned the Ulstermen that in these circumstances they must expect nothing from Parliament, but must trust in themselves. They did not mistake his meaning, and they were quite ready to take his advice.

Coming, as it did, two days before the introduction of the Government's Bill, the Balmoral demonstration profoundly influenced opinion in the country. The average Englishman, when his political party is in a minority, damns the Government, shrugs his shoulders, and goes on his way, not rejoicing indeed, but with apathetic resignation till the pendulum swings again. He now awoke to the fact that the Ulstermen meant business. He realised that a political crisis of the first magnitude was visible on the horizon. The vague talk about "civil war" began to look as if it might have something in it, and it was evident that the provisions of the forthcoming Bill, about which there had been so much eager anticipation, would be of quite secondary importance since neither the Cabinet nor the House of Commons would have the last word.

Supporters of the Government in the Press could think of nothing better to do in these circumstances than to pour out abuse, occasionally varied by ridicule, on the Unionist leaders, of which Sir Edward Carson came in for the most generous portion. He was by turns everything that was bad, dangerous, and absurd, from Mephistopheles to a madman. "F. C. G." summarised the Balmoral meeting pictorially in a *Westminster Gazette* cartoon as a costermonger's donkey-cart in which Carson, Londonderry, and Bonar Law, refreshed by "Orangeade,"

took "an Easter Jaunt in Ulster," and other caricaturists used their pencils with less humour and more malice with the same object of belittling the demonstration with ridicule. But ridicule is not so potent a weapon in England or in Ulster as it is said to be in France. It did nothing to weaken the Ulster cause; it even strengthened it in some ways. It was about this time that hostile writers began to refer to "King Carson," and to represent him as exercising regal sway over his "subjects" in Ulster. Those "subjects" were delighted; they took it as a compliment to their leader's position and power, and did not in the least resent the rôle assigned to themselves.

On the other hand, they did resent very hotly the vulgar insolence often levelled at their "Sir Edward." He himself was always quite indifferent to it, sometimes even amused by it. On one occasion, when something particularly outrageous had appeared with reference to him in some Radical paper, he delighted a public meeting by solemnly reading the passage, and when the angry cries of "Shame, shame" had subsided, saying with a smile: "This sort of thing is only the manure that fertilises my reputation with you who know me."

And that was true. If Home Rulers, whether in Ireland or in Great Britain, ever seriously thought of conciliating Ulster, as Mr. Redmond professed to desire, they never made a greater mistake than in saying and writing insulting things about Carson. It only endeared him more and more to his followers, and it intensified the bitterness of their feeling against the Nationalists and all their works. An almost equally short-sighted error on the part of hostile critics was the idea that the attitude of Ulster as exhibited at Craigavon and Balmoral should be represented as mere bluster and bluff, to which the only proper reply was contempt. There never was anything further removed from the truth, as anyone ought to have known who had the smallest acquaintance with Irish history or with the character of the race that had supplied the backbone of Washington's army; but, if there had been at any time an element of bluff in their attitude, their contemptuous critics took the surest means of converting

it into grim earnestness of purpose. Mr. Redmond himself was ill-advised enough to set an example in this respect. In an article published by *Reynold's Newspaper* in January he had scoffed at the "stupid, hollow, and unpatriotic bellowings" of the Loyalists in Belfast. Some few opponents had enough sense to take a different line in their comments on Balmoral. One article in particular which appeared in *The Star* on the day of the demonstration attracted much attention for this reason.

"We have never yielded," it said, "to the temptation to deride or to belittle the resistance of Ulster to Home Rule. . . . The subjugation of Protestant Ulster by force is one of those things that do not happen in our politics. . . . It is, we know, a popular delusion that Ulster is a braggart whose words are empty bluff. We are convinced that Ulster means what she says, and that she will make good every one of her warnings."

The Star went on to implore Liberals not to be driven "into an attitude of bitter hostility to the Ulster Protestants," with whom it declared they had much in common.

After Balmoral there was certainly more disposition than before on the part of Liberal Home Rulers to acknowledge the sincerity of Ulster and the gravity of the position created by her opposition, and this disposition showed itself in the debates on the Bill; but, speaking generally, the warning of *The Star* was disregarded by its political adherents, and its neglect contributed not a little to the embitterment of the controversy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXCLUSION OF ULSTER

WITHIN forty-eight hours of the Balmoral meeting the Prime Minister moved for leave to introduce the third Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons. Carson immediately stated the Ulster case in a powerful speech which left no room for doubt that, while every clause in the Bill would be contested, it was the setting up of an executive administration responsible to a Parliament in Dublin—that is to say, the central principle of the measure—that would be most strenuously opposed.

There is no occasion here to explain in detail the proposals contained in Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Bill. They form part of the general history of the period, and are accessible to all who care to examine them. Our concern is with the endeavour of Ulster to prevent, if possible, the passage of the Bill to the Statute-book, and, if that should prove impracticable, to prevent its enforcement "in those districts of which they had control." But one or two points that were made in the course of the debates which occupied Parliament for the rest of the year 1912 claim a moment's notice in their bearing on the subject in hand.

Mr. Bonar Law lost no time in fully redeeming the promises he made at Balmoral. Challenged to repeat in Parliament the charges he had made against the Government in Ulster, he not only repeated them with emphasis, but by closely-knit reasoning justified them with chapter and verse. As to Balmoral, "it really was not like a political demonstration; it was the expression of the soul of a people." He declared that "the gulf between the two peoples in Ireland was really far wider than the gulf between Ireland and Great Britain." He then dealt

specifically with the threatened resistance of Ulster. "These people in Ulster," he said, "are under no illusion. They know they cannot fight the British Army. The people of Ulster know that, if the soldiers receive orders to shoot, it will be their duty to obey. They will have no ill-will against them for obeying. But they are ready, in what they believe to be the cause of justice and liberty, to lay down their lives. How are you going to overcome that resistance? Do Honourable Members believe that any Prime Minister could give orders to shoot down men whose only crime is that they refuse to be driven out of our community and be deprived of the privilege of British citizenship? The thing is impossible. All your talk about details, the union of hearts and the rest of it, is a sham. This is a reality. It is a rock, and on that rock this Bill will inevitably make shipwreck."

The Unionist leader then made a searching exposure of the traffic and bargaining between the Cabinet and the Nationalists by which the support of the latter had been bought for a Budget which they hated, the price paid being the Premier's improper advice to the Crown, leading to the mutilation of the Constitution; the acknowledgment in the preamble to the Parliament Act that an immediate reform of the Second Chamber was a "debt of honour"; the omission to redeem that debt, which had provided a new proverb—"Lying as a preamble"; and, finally, the determination to carry Home Rule after deliberately keeping it out of sight during the elections. The Prime Minister's "debt of honour must wait until he has paid his debt of shame"; and the latter debt was being paid by the proposals they were then debating. If those proposals had been submitted to the electors, "there would be a difference," said Mr. Bonar Law, "between the Unionists in England and the Unionists in Ireland. Now there is none. We can imagine nothing which the Unionists in Ireland can do which will not be justified against a trick of this kind."

Dissatisfaction with the financial clauses of the Bill was expressed at once by the General Council of County Councils in Ireland, a purely Nationalist body; but

on the 23rd of April a Nationalist Convention in Dublin, under the influence of Mr. Redmond's oratory, accepted the whole of the Government's proposals with enthusiasm. The first and second readings of the Bill were duly carried by the normal Government majority of about a hundred Liberal, Labour, and Irish Nationalist votes, and the committee stage opened on the 11th of June. On that day an amendment was down for debate which required the most careful consideration by the representatives of Ulster, since their attitude now might have an important bearing on their future policy, and a false step at this stage might easily prove embarrassing later on. The author of this amendment was Mr. Agar-Robartes, a Cornish Liberal Member, whose proposal was to exclude the four counties of Antrim, Derry, Down, and Armagh from the jurisdiction of the proposed Irish Parliament, a gratifying proof that Craigavon and Balmoral were bearing fruit.

A conference of Ulster Members and Peers, and some English Members closely identified with Irish affairs, of whom Mr. Walter Long was one, met at Londonderry House before the sitting of the House on the 11th of June to decide what course to take on this proposal.

It was not surprising to find that there were sharp differences of opinion among those present, for there were obvious objections to supporting the amendment and equally obvious objections to voting against it. The opposition of Ulster for more than a quarter of a century had been directed against Home Rule for any part of Ireland and in any shape or form. No suggestion had ever been made by any of her spokesmen that the Protestant North, or any part of it, should be dealt with separately from the rest of the island, although Carson and others had pointed out that all the arguments in support of Home Rule were equally valid for treating Ulster as a unit. There were both economic and administrative difficulties in such a scheme which were sufficiently obvious, though by no means insuperable; but what weighed far more heavily in the minds of the Ulster members was the anticipation that their acceptance of the proposal would

probably be represented by enemies as a desertion of all the Irish Loyalists outside the four counties named in the amendment, with whom there was in every part of Ulster the most powerful sentiment of solidarity. The idea of taking any action apart from these friends and associates, and of adopting a policy that might seem to imply the abandonment of their opposition to the main principle of the Bill, was one that could not be entertained except under the most compelling necessity.

But, had not that necessity now arisen? The Ulster members had to keep in view the ultimate policy to which they were already committed. That policy, as laid down at Craigavon, was to take over, in the event of the Home Rule Bill being carried, the government "of those districts which they could control" in trust for the Imperial Parliament, and to resist by force if necessary the establishment of the Dublin jurisdiction over those districts. The policy of resistance was always recognised as being strictly limited in area; no one ever supposed that Ulster could forcibly resist Home Rule being set up in the south and west. The likelihood of failure to bring about a dissolution before the Bill became law had to be faced, and if no General Election took place there would be no alternative to resistance. If, then, it were decided to vote against an amendment offering salvation to the four most loyalist counties, what would be their position if ultimately driven to take up arms? Except as to a matter of detail concerning the precise area proposed to be excluded from the Bill, would they not be told that they were fighting for what they might have had by legislation, and what they had deliberately refused to accept? And if they so acted, could they expect not to forfeit the support of the great and growing volume of public opinion which now sympathised with Ulster? They could not, of course, secure themselves against malicious misrepresentation of their motives, but the Ulster members sincerely believed, and many in the South shared the opinion, that if it came to the worst they could be of more use to the Southern Unionists outside a Dublin Parliament than as members of it, where they would be an impotent minority. Moreover,

it was perfectly understood that Ulster was resolved in any case not to enter a legislature in College Green, and there would, therefore, be no more "desertion" of Unionists outside the excluded area if the exclusion were effected by an amendment to the Bill, than if it were the result of what Mr. Bonar Law had called "trusting to themselves."

The considerations thus briefly summarised were thoroughly discussed in all their bearings at the conference at Londonderry House. It was one of many occasions when Sir Edward Carson's colleagues had an opportunity of perceiving how his penetrating intellect explored the intricate windings of a complicated political problem, weighing all the alternatives of procedure with a clear insight into the appearance that any line of conduct would present to other and perhaps hostile minds, calculating like a chess-master move and counter-move far ahead of the present, and, while adhering undeviatingly to principle, using the judgment of a consummate strategist to decide upon the action to be taken at any given moment. He had an astonishing faculty of discarding everything that was unessential and fastening on the thing that really mattered in any situation. His strength in counsel lay in the rare combination of these qualities of the trained lawyer with the gift of intuition, which women claim as their distinguishing characteristic; and it often extorted from Nationalists the melancholy admission that if Carson had been on their side their cause would have triumphed long ago.

His advice now was that the Agar-Robartes amendment should be supported; and, although some of those present required a good deal of persuasion, it was ultimately decided unanimously that this course should be followed. The wisdom of the decision was never afterwards questioned, and, indeed, was abundantly confirmed by subsequent events.

Mr. Agar-Robartes moved his amendment the same afternoon, summarising his argument in the dictum, denied by Mr. William Redmond, that "Orange bitters will not mix with Irish whisky." The debate, which

lasted three days, was the most important that took place in committee on the Bill, for in the course of it the whole Ulster question was exhaustively discussed. Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Churchill had thrown out hints in the second reading debate that the Government might do something to meet the Ulster case. The Prime Minister was now pressed to say what these hints meant. Had the Government any policy in regard to Ulster? Had they considered how they could deal with the threatened resistance? Mr. Bonar Law told the Government that they must know that, if they employed troops to coerce the Ulster Loyalists, Ministers who gave the order "would run a greater risk of being lynched in London than the Loyalists of Ulster would run of being shot in Belfast." Every argument in favour of Home Rule was, he said, equally cogent against subjecting Ulster to Home Rule contrary to her own desire. If the South of Ireland objected to being governed from Westminster, the North of Ireland quite as strongly objected to being ruled from Dublin. If England, as was alleged, was incapable of governing Ireland according to Irish ideas, the Nationalists were fully as incapable of governing the northern counties according to Ulster ideas. If Ireland, with only one-fifteenth of the population of the United Kingdom, had a right to choose its own form of government, by what equity could the same right be denied to Ulster, with one-fourth of the population of Ireland?

As had been anticipated at Londonderry House, Mr. Asquith and some of his followers did their best to drive a wedge between the Ulstermen and the Southern Unionists, by contending that the former, in supporting the amendment, were deserting their friends. Mr. Balfour declared in answer to this that "nothing could relieve Unionists in the rest of Ireland except the defeat of the measure as a whole"; and a crushing reply was given by Mr. J. H. Campbell and Mr. Walter Guinness, both of whom were Unionists from the South of Ireland. Mr. Guinness frankly acknowledged that "it was the duty of Ulster members to take this opportunity of trying to secure for their constituents freedom from this iniquitous measure.

It would be merely a dog-in-the-manger policy for those who lived outside Ulster to grudge relief to their co-religionists merely because they could not share it. Such self-denial on Ulster's part would in no way help them (the Southerners) and it would only injure their compatriots in the North."

Sir Edward Carson, in supporting the amendment, insisted that "Ulster was not asking for anything" except to be left within the Imperial Constitution; she "had not demanded any separate Parliament." He accepted the "basic principle" of the amendment, but would not be content with the four counties which alone it proposed to exclude from the Bill. He only accepted it, however, on two assumptions—first, that the Bill was to become law; and, second, that it was to be, as Mr. Asquith had assured them, part of a federal system for the United Kingdom. If the first steps were being taken to construct a federal system, there was no precedent for coercing Ulster to form part of a federal unit which she refused to join. He had been Solicitor-General when the Act establishing the Commonwealth of Australia was being discussed, and it never would have passed, he declared, "if every single clause had not been agreed to by every single one of the communities concerned." Ministers were always basing their Irish policy on Dominion analogies, but could anyone, Carson asked, imagine the Imperial Government sending troops to compel the Transvaal or New South Wales to come into a federal system against their will?

The arguments in favour of the amendment were also stated with uncompromising force by Mr. William Moore, Mr. Charles Craig, and his brother Captain James Craig, the last-mentioned taking up a challenge thrown down by Mr. Birrell in a maladroit speech which had expressed doubt as to the reality of the danger to be apprehended in Ulster. Captain Craig said they would immediately take steps in Ulster to convince the Chief Secretary of their sincerity. Lord Hugh Cecil, in an outspoken speech, greatly to the taste of English Unionists, "had no hesitation in saying that Ulster would be perfectly right in resisting, and he hoped she would be successful."

In the division on Mr. Agar-Robartes's amendment the Government majority fell to sixty-nine, both the "Tellers" being usual supporters of the Ministry. Mr. F. E. Smith, in a vigorous speech to the Belfast Orangemen on the 12th of July, declared that "on the part of the Government the discussion (on Mr. Agar-Robartes's amendment) was a trap. . . . The Government hoped that Ulster would decline the amendment in order that the Coalition might protest to the constituencies: 'We offered Ulster exclusion and Ulster refused exclusion—where is the grievance of Ulster? where her justification for armed revolt?'" The snare was avoided; but the debate was a landmark in the movement, for it was then that the spokesmen of Ulster for the first time publicly accepted the idea of separate treatment for themselves as a possible alternative policy to the integral maintenance of the Union.

The Government, for their part, made no response to the demand of Bonar Law and Carson that they should declare their intentions for dealing with resistance in Ulster. It was clearly more than ever necessary for the Ulstermen to "trust in themselves." The debates on the Bill occupied Parliament till the end of the year, and beyond it, and great blocks of clauses were carried under the guillotine closure without a word of discussion, although they were packed with constitutional points, many of which were of the highest moment. Over in Ulster, at the same time, those preparations were industriously carried forward which Captain Craig told the House of Commons would be necessary to cure the scepticism of the Chief Secretary.

In England and Scotland, also, Unionists did their utmost to make public opinion realise the gravity of the crisis towards which the country was drifting under the Wait-and-See Ministry. Never before, probably, had so many great political meetings been held in any year as were held in every part of the country in 1912. With the exception of those that took place in Ireland, the most striking was a monster gathering at Blenheim on the 27th of July, which was attended by delegates from every Unionist Association in the United Kingdom.

A notable defeat of the Government in a by-election at Crewe, news of which reached the meeting while the audience of some fifteen thousand people was assembling, was an encouraging sign of the trend of opinion in the country, and added confidence to the note of defiance that sounded in the speeches of Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. F. E. Smith, and Sir Edward Carson.

The Unionist leader repeated, with added emphasis, what he had already said in the House of Commons, that he could imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster might go in which he and the overwhelming majority of the British people would not be ready to give support. He again said that resistance would be justified only because the people had not been consulted, and the Government's policy was " part of a corrupt parliamentary bargain." He refused to acknowledge the right of the Government " to carry such a Revolution by such means," and as they appeared to be resolved to do so, Mr. Bonar Law and the party he led " would use any means to deprive them of the power they had usurped, and to compel them to face the people they had deceived." Mr. F. E. Smith expressed the same thought in a more epigrammatic antithesis: " We have come to a clear issue between the party which says ' We will judge for the democracy,' and the party which says ' The democracy shall judge you.' "

The tremendous enthusiasm evoked by Mr. Bonar Law's pledge of support to Ulster, and by Sir Edward Carson's announcement that they in Ulster " would shortly challenge the Government to interfere with them if they dared, and would with equanimity await the result," was a sufficient proof, if proof were needed, that the intention of the Ulstermen to offer forcible resistance to Home Rule had the whole-hearted sympathy and approval of the entire Unionist party in Great Britain, whose representatives from every corner of the country were assembled at Blenheim.

Liberals hoped and believed that this promise of support for the " rebellious " attitude of Ulster would alienate British opinion from the Unionist party. The supporters of the Government in the Press daily proclaimed that it

was doing so. When Parliament adjourned for the summer recess, at the beginning of what journalists call "the silly season," Mr. Churchill published two letters to a constituent in Scotland which were intended to be a crushing indictment both of Ulster and of her sympathisers in Great Britain. The Ulster menace was in his eyes nothing but "melodramatic stuff," and he sneeringly suggested that the Unionist leaders would be "unspeakably shocked and frightened" if anything came of their "foolish and wicked words." The letter was lengthy, and contained some telling phrases such as Mr. Churchill has always been skilful in coining; but the "turgid homily—a mixture of sophistry, insult, and menace," as *The Times* not unfairly described it, was less effective than the terse and simple rejoinder in which Mr. Bonar Law pointed out that Mr. Churchill's onslaught wounded his father's memory more deeply than it touched his living opponents, since Lord Randolph's "incitement" of Ulster was at a time when Ulster could not be cast out from the Union without the consent of the British electors.

Mr. Churchill's epistles to Scottish Liberals started a correspondence which reverberated through the Press for weeks, breaking the monotony of the holiday season; but they entirely failed in their purpose, which was to break the sympathy for Ulster in England and Scotland. In March the Unionists had won a seat at a by-election in South Manchester; the victory at Crewe in July, which so cheered the gathering at Blenheim, was followed by still more striking victories in North-west Manchester in August, and in Midlothian—Gladstone's old constituency—in September; and perhaps a not less significant indication of the trend of opinion so far as the Unionist party was concerned, was given by the local Unionist Association at Rochdale, which promptly repudiated its selected candidate who had ventured to protest against the Blenheim speech of the Unionist leader. In an analysis of electoral statistics published by *The Times* on the 24th of August it was shown that, in thirty-eight contests since the General Election in December 1910, the Unionists had gained an advantage of more than 32,000 votes over

Liberals. And shortly afterwards, at a dinner in London to three newly elected Unionists, Mr. Bonar Law pointed out that the results of by-elections, if realised in the same proportion all over the country, would have given a substantial Unionist majority in the House of Commons.

The Ulster people had, therefore, much to encourage them at a time when they were preparing the most significant forward step in the movement, and the most solemn pronouncement of their unfaltering resolution never to submit to the Dublin Parliament—the signing of the Ulster Covenant. Their policy of resistance, first propounded at Craigavon, reiterated at Balmoral, endorsed by British sympathisers at Blenheim, and specifically defended in Parliament both by Unionist leaders like Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Long and by prominent members of the Unionist rank and file like Lord Hugh Cecil, had won the approval and support of great popular constituencies in Lancashire and in Scotland, and had alienated no section of Unionist opinion or of the Unionist Press. It was in no merely satirical spirit that Carson wrote in August that he was grateful to Mr. Churchill " for having twice within a few weeks done something to focus public opinion on the stern realities of the situation in Ulster." [1] For that was the actual result of the " turgid homily." It proved of real service to the Ulster cause by bringing to light the complete solidarity of Unionist opinion in its support. That meant, in the light of the electoral returns, that certainly more than half the nation sympathised with the measures that were being taken in Ulster, and that Ulster could well afford to smile at the mockery which English Home Rulers deemed a sufficient weapon to demolish the " wooden guns " and the " military play-acting of King Carson's Army."

[1] See *The Times*, August 19th, 1912.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER IX

THE EVE OF THE COVENANT

THERE was one Liberal statesman, formerly the favourite lieutenant of Gladstone and the closest political ally of Asquith, who was under no illusion as to the character of the men with whom Asquith was now provoking a conflict. Speaking in Edinburgh on the 1st of November, 1911, that is, shortly after the Craigavon meeting, Lord Rosebery told his Scottish audience that "he loved Highlanders and he loved Lowlanders, but when he came to the branch of their race which had been grafted on to the Ulster stem he took off his hat with reverence and awe. They were without exception the toughest, the most dominant, the most irresistible race that existed in the universe." [1]

The kinship of this tough people with the Lowlanders of Scotland, in character as in blood, was never more signally demonstrated than when they decided, in one of the most intense crises of their history, to emulate the example of their Scottish forefathers in binding themselves together by a solemn League and Covenant to resist what they deemed to be a tyrannical encroachment on their liberties and rights.

The most impressive moment at the Balmoral meeting at Easter 1912 was when the vast assemblage, with uncovered heads, raised their hands and repeated after Sir Edward Carson words abjuring Home Rule. The incident suggested to some of the local Unionist leaders that the spirit of enthusiastic solidarity and determination thus manifested should not be allowed to evaporate, and the people so animated to disperse to the four corners of Ulster without any bond of mutual obligation. The idea of an oath of fidelity to the cause and to each other was

[1] *The Scotsman*, November 2nd, 1911.

mooted, and appeared to be favoured by many. The leader was consulted. He gave deep, anxious, and prolonged consideration to the proposal, calculating all the consequences which, in various possible eventualities, might follow its adoption. He was not only profoundly conscious of the moral responsibility which he personally, and his colleagues, would be undertaking by the contemplated measure; he realised the numerous practical difficulties there might be in honouring the bond, and he would have nothing to do with a device which, under the guise of a solemn covenant, would be nothing more than a verbal manifesto. If the people were to be invited to sign anything of the sort, it must be a reality, and he, as leader, must first see his way to make it a reality, whatever might happen.

For, although Carson never shrank from responsibility, he never assumed it with levity, or without full consideration of all that it might involve. Many a time, especially before he had fully tested for himself the temper of the Ulster people, he expressed to his intimates his wonder whether the bulk of his followers sufficiently appreciated the seriousness of the course they had set out upon. Sometimes in private he seemed to be hypersensitive as to whether in any particular he was misleading those who trusted him; he was scrupulously anxious that they should not be carried away by unreflecting enthusiasm, or by personal devotion to himself. About the only criticism of his leadership that was ever made directly to himself by one of the rank and file in Ulster was that it erred on the side of patience and caution; and this criticism elicited the sharpest reproof he was ever heard to administer to any of his followers.[1] His expressions of regard, almost amounting to affection, for the men and women who thronged round him for a touch of his hand wherever he appeared in the streets might have been ignorantly set down as the arts of a demagogue had they ever been spoken in public, but were capable of no such misconstruction when reserved, as they invariably were, for the ears of his closest associates. The truth is that

[1] See Sir E. Carson's speech in *Belfast Newsletter*, September 24th, 1912.

no popular leader was ever less of a demagogue than Sir Edward Carson. He had no "arts" at all—unless indeed complete simplicity is the highest of all "arts" in one whom great masses of men implicitly trust. He never sought to gain or augment the confidence of his followers by concealing facts, minimising difficulties, or overcolouring expectations.

It is not surprising, then, that the decision to invite the Ulster people to bind themselves together by some form of written bond or oath was one which Carson did not come to hastily. While the matter was still only being talked about by a few intimate friends, and had not been in any way formally proposed, Captain James Craig happened to be occupying himself one day at the Constitutional Club in London with pencil and paper, making experimental drafts that might do for the proposed purpose, when he was joined by Mr. B. W. D. Montgomery, Secretary of the Ulster Club in Belfast, who asked what he was doing. "Trying to draft an oath for our people at home," replied Craig, "and it's no easy matter to get at what will suit." "You couldn't do better," said Montgomery, "than take the old Scotch Covenant. It is a fine old document, full of grand phrases, and thoroughly characteristic of the Ulster tone of mind at this day." Thereupon the two men went to the library, where, with the help of the club librarian, they found a History of Scotland containing the full text of the celebrated bond of the Covenanters (first drawn up, by a curious coincidence of names, by John Craig, in 1581), a verbatim copy of which was made from the book.

The first idea was to adapt this famous manifesto of militant Protestantism by making only such abbreviations and alterations as would render it suitable for the purpose in view. But when it was ultimately decided to go forward with the proposal, and the task of preparing the document was entrusted to the Special Commission,[1] it was at once realised that, however strongly the fine old Jacobean language and the historical associations of the Solemn League and Covenant might appeal to the imagina-

[1] See *ante*, p. 53.

tion of a few, it was far too involved and long-winded, no matter how drastically revised, to serve as an actual working agreement between men of to-day, or as a rallying-point for a modern democratic community. What was needed was something quite short and easily intelligible, setting forth in as few words as possible a purpose which the least learned could grasp at a glance, and which all who so desired could sign with full comprehension of what they were doing.

Mr. Thomas Sinclair, one of the Special Commission, was himself a draughtsman of exceptional skill, and in a matter of this kind his advice was always invaluable, and it was under his hand that the Ulster Covenant, after frequent amendment, took what was, with one important exception, its final shape. The last revision cut down the draft by more than one-half; but the portion discarded from the Covenant itself, in the interest of brevity, was retained as a Resolution of the Ulster Unionist Council which accompanied the Covenant and served as a sort of declaratory preamble to it.[1] The exception referred to was an amendment made to meet an objection raised by prominent representatives of the Presbyterian Church. The Special Commission, realising that the proposed Covenant ought not to be promulgated without the consent and approval of the Protestant Churches, submitted the agreed draft to the authorities of the Church of Ireland and of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches. The Moderator, and other leaders of the Presbyterians, including Mr. (afterwards Sir Alexander) McDowell, a man endowed with much of the wisdom of the serpent, while supporting without demur the policy of the Covenant, took exception to its terms in a single particular. They pointed out that the obligation to be accepted by the signatories would be, as the text then stood, of unlimited duration. They objected to undertaking such a responsibility without the possibility of modifying it to meet the changes which time and circumstance might bring about; and they insisted that, before they could advise their congregations to contract so solemn

[1] See p. 106.

an engagement, the text of the Covenant must be amended by the introduction of words limiting its validity to the crisis which then confronted them.

This was accordingly done. Words were introduced which declared the pledge to be binding "throughout this our time of threatened calamity," and its purpose to be the defeat of "the present conspiracy." The language was as precise, and was as carefully chosen, as the language of a legal deed; but in an unhappy crisis which arose in 1916, in circumstances which no one in the world could have foreseen in 1912, there were some in Ulster who were not only tempted to strain the interpretation which the Covenant as a whole could legitimately bear, but who failed to appreciate the significance of the amendments that had been made in its text at the instance of the Presbyterian Church.[1]

When these amendments had been incorporated in the Covenant by the Special Commission, a meeting of the Standing Committee was convened at Craigavon on the 19th of September to adopt it for recommendation to the Council. The Committee, standing in a group outside the door leading from the arcade at Craigavon to the tennis-lawn, listened while Sir Edward Carson read the Covenant aloud from a stone step which now bears an inscription recording the event. Those present showed by their demeanour that they realised the historic character of the transaction in which they were taking part, and the weight of responsibility they were about to assume. But no voice expressed dissent or hesitation. The Covenant was adopted unanimously and without amendment. Its terms were as follows:

"Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant

"Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious

[1] See p. 248.

Majesty King George V, humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. And in the event of such a Parliament being forced upon us we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognise its authority. In sure confidence that God will defend the right we hereto subscribe our names. And further, we individually declare that we have not already signed this Covenant. God save the King."

On Monday, the 23rd of September, the Ulster Unionist Council, the body representing the whole loyalist community on an elective and thoroughly democratic basis, held its annual meeting in the Ulster Hall, the chief business being the ratification of the Covenant prior to its being presented for general signature throughout the province on Ulster Day. Upwards of five hundred delegates attended the meeting, and unanimously approved the terms of the document recommended for their acceptance by their Standing Committee. They then adopted, on the motion of Lord Londonderry, the Resolution which, as already mentioned, had originally formed part of the draft of the Covenant itself. This Resolution, as well as the Covenant, was the subject of extensive comment in the English and Scottish Press. Some opponents of Ulster directed against it the flippant ridicule which appeared to be their only weapon against a movement the gravity of which was admitted by Ministers of the Crown; but, on the whole, the British Press acknowledged the important enunciation of political principle which it contained. It placed on record that:

"Inasmuch as we, the duly elected delegates and members of the Ulster Unionist Council, representing all parts of Ulster, are firmly persuaded that by no law can the right to govern those whom we represent be bartered

away without their consent; that although the present Government, the services and sacrifices of our race having been forgotten, may drive us forth from a Constitution which we have ever loyally upheld, they may not deliver us bound into the hands of our enemies; and that it is incompetent for any authority, party, or people to appoint as our rulers a Government dominated by men disloyal to the Empire and to whom our faith and traditions are hateful; and inasmuch as we reverently believe that, as in times past it was given our fathers to save themselves from a like calamity, so now it may be ordered that our deliverance shall be by our own hands, to which end it is needful that we be knit together as one man, each strengthening the other, and none holding back or counting the cost—therefore we, Loyalists of Ulster, ratify and confirm the steps so far taken by the Special Commission this day submitted and explained to us, and we reappoint the Commission to carry on its work on our behalf as in the past.

"We enter into the Solemn Covenant appended hereto, and, knowing the greatness of the issues depending on our faithfulness, we promise each to the others that, to the uttermost of the strength and means given us, and not regarding any selfish or private interest, our substance or our lives, we will make good the said Covenant; and we now bind ourselves in the steadfast determination that, whatever may befall, no such domination shall be thrust upon us, and in the hope that by the blessing of God our Union with Great Britain, upon which are fixed our affections and trust, may yet be maintained, and that for ourselves and for our children, for this Province and for the whole of Ireland, peace, prosperity, and civil and religious liberty may be secured under the Parliament of the United Kingdom and of the King whose faithful subjects we are and will continue all our days."

It had been known for some weeks that it was the intention of the Ulster Loyalists to dedicate the 28th of September as "Ulster Day," by holding special religious services, after which they were to "pledge themselves to a solemn Covenant," the terms of which were not yet published or, indeed, finally settled. This announcement, which appeared in the Press on the 17th of August, was

hailed in England as an effective reply to the recent "turgid homily" of Mr. Churchill, but there was really no connection between them in the intentions of Ulstermen, who had been too much occupied with their own affairs to pay much attention to the attack upon them in the Dundee letters. The Ulster Day celebration was to be preceded by a series of demonstrations in many of the chief centres of Ulster, at which the purpose of the Covenant was to be explained to the people by the leader and his colleagues, and a number of English Peers and Members of Parliament arranged to show their sympathy with the policy embodied in the Covenant by taking part in the meetings.

It would not be true to say that the enthusiasm displayed at this great series of meetings in September eclipsed all that had gone before, for it would not be possible for human beings greatly to exceed in that emotion what had been seen at Craigavon and Balmoral; but they exhibited an equally grave sense of responsibility, and they proved that the same exaltation of mind, the same determined spirit, that had been displayed by Loyalists collected in the populous capital of their province, equally animated the country towns and rural districts.

The campaign opened at Enniskillen on the 18th of September, where the leader was escorted by two squadrons of mounted and well-equipped yeomen from the station to Portora Gate, at which point 40,000 members of Unionist Clubs drawn from the surrounding agricultural districts marched past him in military order. During the following nine days demonstrations were held at Lisburn, Derry, Coleraine, Ballymena, Dromore, Portadown, Crumlin, Newtownards, and Ballyroney, culminating with a meeting in the Ulster Hall—loyalist headquarters—on the eve of the signing of the Covenant on Ulster Day. At six of these meetings, including, of course, the last, Sir Edward Carson was the principal speaker, while all the Ulster Unionist Members of Parliament took part in their several constituencies. Lord Londonderry was naturally prominent among the speakers, and presided as usual, when the Duke of Abercorn was prevented by illness from being present, in the Ulster Hall. Mr. F. E. Smith, who had

closely identified himself with the Ulster Movement, delighting with his fresh and vigorous eloquence the meetings at Balmoral and Blenheim, as well as the Orange Lodges whom he had addressed on the 12th of July, crossed the Channel to lend a helping hand, and spoke at five meetings on the tour. Others who took part—in addition to local men like Mr. Thomas Sinclair and Mr. John Young, whose high character always made their appearance on political platforms of value to the cause they supported—were Lord Charles Beresford, Lord Salisbury, Mr. James Campbell, Lord Hugh Cecil, Lord Willoughby de Broke, and Mr. Harold Smith; while the Marquis of Hamilton and Lord Castlereagh, by the part which they took in the programme, showed their desire to carry on the traditions which identified the two leading Ulster families with loyalist principles.

A single resolution, identical in the simplicity of its terms, was carried without a dissenting voice at every one of these meetings: "We hereby reaffirm the resolve of the great Ulster Convention of 1892: 'We will not have Home Rule.'" These words became so familiar that the laconic phrase "We won't have it," was on everybody's lips as the Alpha and Omega of Ulster's attitude, and was sometimes heard with unexpected abruptness in no very precise context. A ticket-collector, when clipping the tickets of the party who were starting from Belfast in a saloon for Enniskillen, made no remark and no sign of recognition till he reached Carson, when he said almost in a whisper and without a glimmer of a smile, as he took a clip out of the leader's ticket: "Tell the station-master at Clones, Sir Edward, that we won't have it." He doubtless knew that the political views of that misguided official were of the wrong colour. A conversation overheard in the crowd at Enniskillen before the speaking began was a curious example of the habit so characteristic of Ulster—and indeed of other parts of Ireland also—of thinking of

> "Old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago"

as if they had occurred last week, and were a factor

to be taken into account in the conduct of to-day. The demonstration was in the open air, and the sunshine was gleaming on the grass of a hill close at hand. "It 'ud be a quare thing," said a peasant to his neighbour in the crowd, "if the rebels would come out and hould a meetin' agin us on yon hill." "What matter if they would," was the reply, "wouldn't we let on that we won't have it? an' if that wouldn't do them, isn't there hundreds o' King James's men at the bottom o' the lough, an' there's plenty o' room yet." It was not spoken in jest, but in grim conviction that the issue of 1689 was the issue of 1912, and that another Newtown Butler might have to be fought.

This series of meetings in preparation for the Covenant brought Carson much more closely in touch with the Loyalists in outlying districts than he had been hitherto, and when it was over their wild devotion to him personally equalled what it was in Belfast itself. The appeal made to the hearts of men as quick as any living to detect and resent humbug or boastfulness, by the simplicity, uncompromising directness, and courage of his character was irresistible. He never spoke better than during this tour of the Province. The Special Correspondent of *The Times*, who sent to his paper vivid descriptive articles on each meeting, said in his account of the meeting at Coleraine that "Sir Edward Carson was vigorous, fresh, and picturesque. His command over the feelings of his Ulster audiences is unquestionable, and never a phrase passes his lips which does not tell." And when the proceedings of the meeting were over, the same observer "was at the station to witness the 'send-off' of the leaders, and for ten minutes before the train for Belfast came in the tumult of the cheers, the thanks, and the farewells never faltered for an instant." [1] Two days later another English commentator declared that "The Ulster campaign has been conducted up to the present with a combination of wisdom, ability, and restraint which has delighted all the Unionists of the province, and exasperated their Radical and Nationalist enemies. From its opening at Enniskillen

[1] *The Times*, September 23rd, 1912.

not a speech has been delivered unworthy of a great movement in defence of civil and religious liberty." [1]

It was characteristic of Sir Edward Carson that neither at these meetings nor at any time did he use his unmatched power of persuasion to induce his followers to come forward and sign the Covenant. On the contrary, he rather warned them only to do so after mature reflection and with full comprehension of the responsibility which signature would entail. He told the Unionist Council a few days before the memorable 28th of September: "How often have I thought over this Covenant—how many hours have I spent, before it was published that we would have one, in counting the cost that may result! How many times have I thought of what it may mean to all that we care about up here! Does any man believe that I lightly took this matter in hand without considering with my colleagues all that it may mean either in the distant or the not too distant future? No, it is the gravest matter in all the grave matters in the various offices I have held that I have ever had to consider." And he went on to advise the delegates, "responsible men from every district in Ulster, that it is your duty, when you go back to your various districts, to warn your people who trust you that, in entering into this solemn obligation, they are entering into a matter which, whatever may happen in the future, is the most serious matter that has ever confronted them in the course of their lives." [2]

A political campaign such as that of September 1912 could not be a success, however spontaneous the enthusiasm of the people, however effective the oratory, unless the arrangements were based on good organisation. It was by general consent a triumph of organisation, the credit for which was very largely due to Mr. Richard Dawson Bates, the Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council. Sir Edward Carson himself very wisely paid little attention to detail; happily there was no need for him to do so, for he had beside him in Captain James Craig and Mr. Bates two men with real genius for organ-

[1] *The Daily Telegraph*, September 25th, 1912.
[2] *Belfast Newsletter*, September 24th, 1912.

isation, and indefatigable in relieving "the chief" of all unnecessary work and worry. Mr. Bates had all the threads of a complex network of organisation in his hands; he kept in close touch with leading Unionists in every district; he always knew what was going on in out-of-the-way corners, and where to turn for the right man for any particular piece of work. Anyone whose duty it has been to manage even a single political demonstration on a large scale knows what numerous details have to be carefully foreseen and provided for. In Ulster a succession of both outdoor and indoor demonstrations, seldom if ever equalled in this country in magnitude and complexity of arrangement, besides an amazing quantity of other miscellaneous work inseparable from the conduct of a political movement in which crisis followed crisis with bewildering rapidity, were managed year after year from Mr. Bates's office in the Old Town Hall with a quiet, unostentatious efficiency which only those could appreciate who saw the machine at work and knew the master mechanic behind it. Of this efficiency the September demonstrations in 1912 were a conspicuous illustration.

Nor did the Loyalist women of Ulster lag an inch behind the men either in organisation or in zeal for the Unionist cause, and their keenness at every town visited in this September tour was exuberantly displayed. Women had not yet been enfranchised, of course, and the Ulster women had shown but little interest in the suffragette agitation which was raging at this time in England; but they had organised themselves in defence of the Union very effectively on parallel lines to the men, and if the latter had needed any stimulus to their enthusiasm they would certainly have got it from their mothers, sisters, and wives. The Marchioness of Londonderry threw herself whole-heartedly into the movement. Having always ably seconded her husband's many political and social activities, she made no exception in regard to his devotion to Ulster. Lord Londonderry, she was fond of saying, was an Ulsterman born and bred, and she was an Ulsterwoman "by adoption and grace." Her energy was inexhaustible, and her enthusiasm contagious; she used her influence and

her wonderful social gifts unsparingly in the Unionist cause.

A meeting of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council, of which the Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, widow of the great diplomat, was president, was held on the 17th of September, the day before the demonstration at Enniskillen, when a resolution proposed by Lady Londonderry declaring the determination of Ulster women to stand by their men in the policy to be embodied in the Covenant, was carried with immense enthusiasm and without dissent. No women were so vehement in their support of the Loyalist cause as the factory workers, who were very numerous in Belfast. Indeed, their zeal, and their manner of displaying it, seemed sometimes to illustrate a well-known line of Kipling's, considered by some to be anything but complimentary to the female sex. Anyhow, there was no divergence of opinion or sympathy between the two sexes in Ulster on the question of Union or Home Rule; and the women who everywhere attended the meetings in large numbers were no idle sightseers—though they were certainly hero-worshippers of the Ulster leader—but a genuine political force to be taken into account.

It was during the September campaign that the "wooden guns" and "dummy rifles" appeared, which excited so much derision in the English Radical Press, whose editors little dreamed that the day was not far distant when Mr. Asquith's Government would be glad enough to borrow those same dummy rifles for training the new levies of Kitchener's Army to fight the Germans. So far as the Ulstermen were concerned the ridicule of their quasi-military display and equipment never had any sting in it. They were conscious of the strength given to their cause by the discipline and military organisation of the volunteers, even if the weapons with which they drilled should never be replaced by the real thing; and many of them had an instinctive belief that their leaders would see to it that they were effectively armed all in good time. And so with grim earnestness they recruited the various battalions of volunteers, gave up their evenings to drilling, provided

cyclist corps, signalling corps, ambulances and nurses; they were proud to receive their leader with guards of honour at the station, and bodyguards while he drove through their town or district to the meetings where he spoke. Few of them probably ever so much as heard of the gibes of *The Irish News*, *The Daily News*, or *The Westminster Gazette* at the "royal progresses" of "King Carson"; but they would have been in no way upset by them if they had, for they were far too much in earnest themselves to pay heed to the cheap sneers of others. At each one of the September meetings there was a military setting to the business of the day. At Enniskillen Carson was conducted by a cavalry escort to the ground where he was to address the people; at Coleraine, Portadown, and other places volunteers lined the route and marched in column to and from the meeting. They were, it is true, but "half-baked" levies, with more zeal than knowledge of military duties. But competent critics—and there were many such amongst the visitors—praised their bearing and physique and the creditable measure of discipline they had already acquired. And it must be remembered that in September 1912 the Ulster Volunteer Force was still in its infancy. In the following two years its improvement in efficiency was very marked; and within three years of the time when its battalions paraded before Sir Edward Carson, with dummy rifles, and marched before him to his meetings in Lisburn, Newtownards, Enniskillen, and Belfast on the eve of the Covenant, those same men had gloriously fought against the flower of the Prussian Army, and many of them had fallen in the battle of the Somme.

The final meeting in the Ulster Hall on Friday the 27th of September was an impressive climax to the tour. Many English journalists and other visitors were present, and some of them admitted that, in spite of all they had heard of what an Ulster Hall meeting was like, they were astonished by the soul-stirring fervour they witnessed, and especially by the wonderful spectacle presented at the overflow meeting in the street outside, which was packed as far as the eye could reach in either direction with

upturned faces, eager to catch the words addressed to them from a platform erected for the speakers outside an upper window of the building.[1]

Messages of sympathy and approval at this supreme moment were read from Mr. Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Long, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain. Then, after brief speeches by four local Belfast men, one of whom was a representative of Labour, and while the audience were waiting eagerly for the speech of their leader, there occurred what *The Times* next day described as " two entirely delightful, and, as far as the crowd was concerned, two entirely unexpected episodes." The first was the presentation to Sir Edward Carson of a faded yellow silk banner by Colonel Wallace, Grand Master of the Belfast Orangemen, who explained that it was the identical banner that had been carried before King William III at the battle of the Boyne, and was now lent by its owner, a lineal descendant of the original standard-bearer, to be carried before Carson to the signing of the Covenant; the second was the presentation to the leader of a silver key, symbolic of Ulster as " the key of the situation," and a silver pen wherewith to sign the Covenant on the morrow, by Captain James Craig. " The two incidents," continued the Correspondent of *The Times*, " were followed by the audience with breathless excitement, and made a remarkably effective prelude to Sir Edward Carson's speech. Premeditated, no doubt, that incident of the banner—yet entirely graceful, entirely fitting to the spirit of the occasion—a plan carried through with the sense of ceremony which Ulstermen seem to have always at their command in moments of emotion."

And if ever there was a " moment of emotion " for the Loyalists of Ulster—those descendants of the Plantation men who had been deliberately sent to Ireland with a commission from the first sovereign of a united Britain to uphold British interests, British honour, and the Reformed Faith across the narrow sea—Loyalists who were conscious

[1] The article which appeared on the following Sunday in *The Observer*, showed how profoundly a distinguished London editor and writer had been moved by what he saw in Belfast.

that throughout the generations they had honestly striven to be faithful to their mission—if ever in their long and stormy history they experienced a " moment of emotion," it was assuredly on this evening before the signing of their Covenant.

The speeches delivered by their leader and others were merely a vent for that emotion. There was nothing that could be said about their cause that they did not know already; but all felt that the heart of the matter was touched—the whole situation, so far as they were concerned, summed up in a single sentence of Carson's speech: " We will take deliberately a step forward, not in defiance but in defence; and the Covenant which we will most willingly sign to-morrow will be a great step forward, in no spirit of aggression, in no spirit of ascendancy, but with a full knowledge that, if necessary, you and I—you trusting me, and I trusting you—will follow out everything that this Covenant means to the very end, whatever the consequences." Every man and woman who heard these words was filled with an exalted sense of the solemnity of the occasion. The mental atmosphere was not that of a political meeting, but of a religious service—and, in fact, the proceedings had been opened by prayer, as had become the invariable custom on such occasions in Ulster. It was felt to be a time of individual preparation for the *Sacramentum* of the following day, which Protestant Ulster had set apart as a day of self-dedication to a cause for which they were willing to make any sacrifice.

CHAPTER X

THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT

Ulster Day, Saturday the 28th of September, 1912, was kept as a day of religious observance by the Northern Loyalists. So far as the Protestants of all denominations were concerned, Ulster was a province at prayer on that memorable Saturday morning. In Belfast, not only the services which had more or less of an official character—those held in the Cathedral, in the Ulster Hall, in the Assembly Hall—but those held in nearly all the places of worship in the city, were crowded with reverent worshippers. It was the same throughout the country towns and rural districts—there was hardly a village or hamlet where the parish church and the Presbyterian and Methodist meeting-houses were not attended by congregations of unwonted numbers and fervour. Not that there was any of the religious excitement such as accompanies revivalist meetings; it was simply that a population, naturally religious-minded, turned instinctively to divine worship as the fitting expression of common emotion at a moment of critical gravity in their history. "One noteworthy feature," commented upon by one of the English newspaper correspondents in a despatch telegraphed during the day, "is the silence of the great shipyards. In these vast industrial establishments on both sides of the river, 25,000 men were at work yesterday performing their task at the highest possible pressure, for the order-books of both firms are full of orders. Now there is not the sound of a hammer; all is as silent as the grave. The splendid craftsmen who build the largest ships in the world have donned their Sunday clothes, and, with Unionist buttons on the lapels of their coats, or Orange sashes on their shoulders, are about to engage on what to them is an even more important

task." He also noticed that although the streets were crowded there was no excitement, for "the average Ulsterman performs his religious and political duties with calm sobriety. He has no time to-day for mirth or merriment, for every minute is devoted to proving that he is still the same man—devoted to the Empire, to the King, and Constitution." [1]

There is at all times in Ulster far less sectarian enmity between the Episcopal and other Reformed Churches than in England; on Ulster Day the complete harmony and co-operation between them was a marked feature of the observances. At the Cathedral in Belfast the preacher was the Bishop of Down,[2] while a Presbyterian minister representing the Moderator of the General Assembly, and the President of the Methodist College took part in the conduct of the service. At the Ulster Hall the same unity was evidenced by a similar co-operation between clergy of the three denominations, and also at the Assembly Hall (a Presbyterian place of worship), where Dr. Montgomery, the Moderator, was assisted by a clergyman of the Church of Ireland representing the Bishop.

The service in the Ulster Hall was attended by Sir Edward Carson, the Lord Mayor of Belfast (Mr. McMordie, M.P.), most of the distinguished visitors from England, and by those Ulster members whose constituencies were in or near the city; those representing country seats went thither to attend local services and to sign the Covenant with their own constituents.

One small but significant detail in the day's proceedings was much noticed as a striking indication of the instinctive realisation by the crowd of the exceptional character of the occasion. Bedford Street, where the Ulster Hall is, was densely packed with spectators, but when the leader arrived, instead of the hurricane of cheers that invariably greeted his appearance in the streets, there was nothing but a general uncovering of heads and respectful silence. It is true that the people abundantly compensated themselves for this moment of self-restraint later on, until in

[1] *The Standard*, September 30th, 1912.
[2] Dr. D'Arcy, now (1922) Primate of All Ireland.

the evening one wondered how human throats could survive so many hours of continuous strain; but the contrast only made the more remarkable that almost startling silence before the religious service began.

The " sense of ceremony " which *The Times* Correspondent on another occasion had declared to be characteristic of Ulstermen " in moments of emotion," was certainly displayed conspicuously on Ulster Day. Ceremony at large public functions is naturally cast in a military mould—marching men, bands of music, display of flags, guards of honour, and so forth—and although on this occasion there was, it is true, more than mere decorative significance in the military frame to the picture, it was an admirably designed and effective spectacle. It is but a few hundred yards from the Ulster Hall to the City Hall, where the signing of the Covenant was to take place. When the religious service ended, about noon, Sir Edward Carson and his colleagues proceeded from one hall to the other on foot. The Boyne standard, which had been presented to the leader the previous evening, was borne before him to the City Hall. He was escorted by a guard consisting of a hundred men from the Orange Lodges of Belfast and a like number representing the Unionist clubs of the city. These clubs had also provided a force of 2,500 men, whose duty, admirably performed throughout the day, was to protect the gardens and statuary surrounding the City Hall from injury by the crowd, and to keep a clear way to the Hall for the endless stream of men entering to sign the Covenant.

The City Hall in Belfast is a building of which Ulster is justly proud. It is, indeed, one of the few modern public buildings in the British Islands in which the most exacting critic of architecture finds nothing to condemn. Standing in the central site of the city with ample garden space in front, its noble proportions and beautiful façade and dome fill the view from the broad thoroughfare of Donegal Place. The main entrance hall, leading to a fine marble stairway, is circular in shape, surrounded by a marble colonnade carrying the dome, to which the hall is open through the full height of the building. It was in this central space

beneath the dome that a round table covered with the Union Jack was placed for the signing of the Covenant by the Ulster leaders and the most prominent of their supporters.

To those Englishmen who have never been able to grasp the Ulster point of view, and who have, therefore, persisted in regarding the Ulster Movement as a phase of party politics in the ordinary sense, it must appear strange and even improper that the City Hall, the official quarters of the Corporation, should have been put to the use for which it was lent on Ulster Day, 1912. The vast majority of the citizens, whose property it was, thought it could be used for no better purpose than to witness their signatures to a deed securing to them their birthright in the British Empire.

At the entrance to the City Hall Sir Edward Carson was received by the Lord Mayor and members of the Corporation wearing their robes of office, and by the Harbour Commissioners, the Water Board, and the Poor Law Guardians, by whom he was accompanied into the hall. The text of Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant had been printed on sheets with places for ten signatures on each; the first sheet lay on the table for Edward Carson to sign.

No man but a dullard without a spark of imagination could have witnessed the scene presented at that moment without experiencing a thrill which he would have found it difficult to describe. The sunshine, sending a beam through the stained glass of the great window on the stairway, threw warm tints of colour on the marbles of the columns and the tesselated floor of the hall, sparkled on the Lord Mayor's chain, lent a rich glow to the scarlet gowns of the City Fathers, and lit up the red and the blue and the white of the Imperial flag which draped the table and which was the symbol of so much that they revered to those who stood looking on. They were grouped in a semicircle behind the leader as he stepped forward to sign his name—men of substance, leaders in the commercial life of a great industrial city, elderly men many of them, lovers of peace and order; men of mark who had served

the Crown, like Londonderry and Campbell and Beresford; Doctors of Divinity, guides and teachers of religion, like the Bishop and the Moderator of the General Assembly; Privy Councillors; members of the Imperial Parliament; barristers and solicitors, shopkeepers and merchants,—there they all stood, silent witnesses of what all felt to be one of the deeds that make history, assembled to set their hands, each in his turn, to an Instrument which, for good or evil, would influence the destiny of their race; while behind them through the open door could be seen a vast forest of human heads, endless as far as eye could reach, every one of whom was in eager accord with the work in hand, and whose blended voices, while they waited to perform their own part in the great transaction, were carried to the ears of those in the hall like the inarticulate noise of moving waters.

When Carson had signed the Covenant he handed the silver pen to Londonderry, and the latter's name was followed in order by the signatures of the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore (afterwards Primate of All Ireland), the Dean of Belfast (afterwards Bishop of Down), the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church, the President of the Methodist Conference, the ex-Chairman of the Congregational Union, Viscount Castlereagh, and Mr. James Chambers, M.P. for South Belfast; and the rest of the company, including the Right Hon. Thomas Sinclair and the veteran Sir William Ewart, as well as the members of the Corporation and other public authorities and boards, having attached their signatures to other sheets, the general public waiting outside were then admitted.

The arrangements for signature by the general public had fully taxed the organising ability of the specially appointed Ulster Day Committee, and their three hon. secretaries, Mr. Dawson Bates, Mr. McCammon, and Mr. Frank Hall. They made provision for signatures to be received in many hundreds of localities throughout Ulster, but it was impossible to estimate closely the numbers that would require accommodation at the City Hall. Lines of desks, giving a total desk-space of more than a third of a

mile, were placed along both sides of the corridors on the upper and lower floors of the building, which enabled 540 persons to sign the Covenant simultaneously. It all worked wonderfully smoothly, largely because every individual in the multitude outside was anxious to help in maintaining orderly procedure, and behaved with the greatest patience and willingness to follow directions. The people were admitted to the Hall in batches of 400 or 500 at a time, and as there was no confusion there was no waste of time. All through the afternoon and up to 11 p.m., when the Hall was closed, there was an unceasing flow of men eager to become Covenanters. Immense numbers who belonged to the Orange Lodges, Unionist clubs, or other organised bodies, marched to the Hall in procession, and those whose route lay through Royal Avenue had an opportunity, of which they took the fullest advantage, of cheering Carson, who watched the memorable scene from the balcony of the Reform Club, the quondam headquarters of Ulster Liberalism.

Prominent and influential men in the country districts refrained from coming to Belfast, preferring to sign the Covenant with their neighbours in their own localities. The Duke of Abercorn, who had been prevented by failing health from taking an active part in the movement of late, and whose life unhappily was drawing to a close, signed the Covenant at Barons Court; his son, the Marquis of Hamilton, M.P. for Derry, attached his signature in the Maiden City together with the Bishop; another prelate, the Bishop of Clogher, signed at Enniskillen with the Grand Master of the Orangemen, Lord Erne; at Armagh, the Primate of All Ireland, the Dean, and Sir John Lonsdale, M.P. (afterwards Lord Armaghdale), headed the list of signatures; the Provost of Trinity College signed in Dublin; and at Ballymena the veteran Presbyterian Privy Councillor, Mr. John Young, and his son Mr. William Robert Young, Hon. Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council, and for thirty years one of the most zealous and active workers for the Loyalist cause, were the first to sign. But a more notable Covenanter than any of these local leaders was Lord Macnaghten, one of the most

illustrious of English Judges, whose great position as Lord of Appeal did not deter him from wholly identifying himself with his native Ulster, by accepting the full responsibility of the signatories of the Covenant.

Ulstermen living in other parts of Ireland, and in Great Britain, were not forgotten. Arrangements were made enabling such to sign the Covenant in Dublin, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, and York. Two curious details may be added, which no reader who is alive to the picturesqueness of historical associations will deem too trivial to be worth recording. In Edinburgh a number of Ulstermen signed the Covenant in the old Greyfriars' Churchyard on the "Covenanters' Stone," the well-known memorial of the Scottish Covenant of the seventeenth century; and the other incident was that, among some twenty men who signed the Covenant in Belfast with their own blood, Major Crawford was able to claim that he was following a family tradition, inasmuch as a lineal ancestor had in the same grim fashion emphasised his adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant in 1638.

The most careful precautions were taken to ensure that all who signed were properly entitled to do so, by requiring evidence to be furnished of their Ulster birth or domicile, and references able to corroborate it. The declaration in the Covenant itself that the person signing had not already done so was in order to make sure that none of the signatures should be duplicates. When the lists were closed—they were kept open for some days after Ulster Day—they were very carefully scrutinised by a competent staff at the Old Town Hall, and it is certain that the numbers as eventually published included no duplicate signature and none that was not genuine. Precisely the same care was taken in the case of the Declaration by which, in words similar to the Covenant but without its pledge for definite action, the women of Ulster associated themselves with the men "in their uncompromising opposition to the Home Rule Bill now before Parliament."

It was not until the 22nd of November that the scrutiny and verification of the signatures was completed, and the actual numbers published. They were as follows: In

Ulster itself 218,206 men had registered themselves as Covenanters, and 228,991 women had signed the Declaration; in the rest of Ireland and in Great Britain 19,162 men and 5,055 women had signed. Thus, a grand total of 471,414 Ulster men and women gave their adherence to the policy of which the Ulster Covenant was the solemn pledge. To every one of these was given a copy of the document printed on parchment, to be retained as a memento, and in thousands of cottages throughout Ulster the framed Covenant hangs to-day in an honoured place, and is the householder's most treasured possession.

Although the main business of the day was over, so far as Carson and the other leaders were concerned, when they had signed the Covenant in the City Hall at noon, every hour, and every minute in the hour, until they took their departure in the Liverpool packet in the evening, was full of incident and excitement. The multitude in the streets leading to the City Hall was so densely packed that they had great difficulty in making their way to the Reform Club, where they were to be entertained at lunch. And, as every man and woman in the crowd was desperately anxious the moment they saw him to get near enough to Carson to shake him by the hand, the pressure of the swaying mass of humanity was a positive danger. Happily the behaviour of the people was as exemplary as it was tumultuously enthusiastic. *The Times* Special Correspondent thus summed up his impressions of the scene:

"Belfast did all that a city could do for such an occasion. I do not well see how its behaviour could have been more impressive. The tirelessness of the crowd—it was that perhaps which struck me most; and, secondly, the good conduct of the crowd. Belfast had one of the lowest of its Saturday records for drunkenness and disorderliness yesterday. I was in the Reform Club between one and three o'clock. Again and again I went out on the balcony and watched the streets. I saw the procession of thousands upon thousands come down Royal Avenue. But this was not the only line of march, for all Belfast was now converging upon the City Hall, the arrangements in which must have been elaborate. It was a procession a descrip-

tion of which would have been familiar to the Belfast public, but the like of which is only seen in Ulster."

The tribute here paid to the conduct of the Belfast crowd was well merited. But in this respect the day of the Covenant was not so exceptional as it would have been before the beginning of the Ulster Movement. Before that period neither Belfast nor any part of Ulster could have been truthfully described as remarkable for its sobriety. But by the universal testimony of those qualified to judge in such matters—police, clergy of all denominations, and workers for social welfare—the political movement had a sobering and steadying influence on the people, which became more and more noticeable as the movement developed, and especially as the volunteers grew in numbers and discipline. The " man in the street " gained a sense of responsibility from the feeling that he formed one of a great company whom it was his wish not to discredit, and he found occupation for mind and body which diminished the temptations of idle hours.

From the Reform Club Carson, Londonderry, Beresford, and F. E. Smith went to the Ulster Club, just across the street, where they dined as the guests of Lord Mayor McMordie before leaving for Liverpool ; and it was outside that dingy building that the enthusiasm of the people reached a climax. None who witnessed it can ever forget the scene, which the English newspaper correspondents required all their superlatives to describe for London readers next day. Those superlatives need not be served up again here. One or two bald facts will perhaps give to anyone possessing any faculty of visualisation as clear an idea as they could get from any number of dithyrambic pages. The distance from the Ulster Club to the quay where the Liverpool steamer is berthed is ordinarily less than a ten minutes' walk. The wagonette in which the Ulster leader and his friends were drawn by human muscles took three minutes short of an hour to traverse it. It was estimated that into that short space of street some 70,000 to 100,000 people had managed to jam themselves. Movement was almost out of the question, yet everyone

within reach tried to press near enough to grasp hands with the occupants of the carriage. When at last the shed was reached the people could not bear to let Carson disappear through the gates. *The Times* Correspondent heard them shout, "Don't leave us," "You mustn't leave us," and, he added, "It was seriously meant; it was only when someone pointed out that Sir Edward Carson had work to do in England for Ulster, that the crowd finally gave way and made an opening for their hero." [1] There had been speeches from the balcony of the Reform Club in the afternoon; speeches from the window of the Ulster Club in the evening; speeches outside the dock gates; speeches from the deck of the steamer before departure; speeches by Carson, by Londonderry, by F. E. Smith, by Lord Charles Beresford—and the purport of one and all of them could be summed up in the familiar phrase, "We won't have it." But this simple theme, elaborated through all the modulations of varied oratory, was one of which the Belfast populace was no more capable of becoming weary than is the music lover of tiring of a recurrent *leitmotif* in a Wagner opera.

At last the ship moved off, and speech was no longer possible. It was replaced by song, "Rule Britannia"; then, as the space to the shore widened, "Auld Lang Syne"; and finally, when the figures lining the quay were growing invisible in the darkness, those on board heard thousands of Loyalists fervently singing "God save the King."

[1] *The Times*, September 30th, 1912.

CHAPTER XI

PASSING THE BILL

No part of Great Britain displayed a more constant and whole-hearted sympathy with the attitude of Ulster than the city of Liverpool. There was much in common between Belfast and the great commercial port on the Mersey. Both were the home of a robust Protestantism, which perhaps was reinforced by the presence in both of a quarter where Irish Nationalists predominated. Just as West Belfast gave a seat in Parliament to the most forceful of the younger Nationalist generation, Mr. Devlin, the Scotland Division of Liverpool had for a generation been represented by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, one of the veteran leaders of the Parnellite period. In each case the whole of the rest of the city was uncompromisingly Conservative, and among the members for Liverpool at the time was Mr. F. E. Smith, unquestionably the most brilliant of the rising generation of Conservatives, who had already conspicuously identified himself with the Ulster Movement, and was a close friend as well as a political adherent of Carson. Among local leaders of opinion in Liverpool Alderman Salvidge exercised a wide and powerful influence on the Unionist side.

It was in accordance with the fitness of things, therefore, that Liverpool should have wished to associate itself in no doubtful manner with the men who had just subscribed to the Covenant on the other side of the Channel. Having left Belfast amid the wonderful scenes described in the last chapter, Carson, Londonderry, F. E. Smith, Beresford, and the rest of the distinguished visitors awoke next morning—if the rollers of the Irish Sea permitted sleep—in the oily waters of the Mersey, to find at the landing-stage a crowd that in dimensions and demeanour seemed to be a duplicate of the one they had left outside the dock gates

at Belfast. Except that the point round which everything had centred in Belfast, the signing of the Covenant, was of course missing in Liverpool, the Unionists of Liverpool were not to be outdone by the Ulstermen themselves in their demonstration of loyalty to the Union.

The packet that carried the group of leaders across the Channel happened to be, appropriately enough, the R.M.S. *Patriotic*. As she steamed slowly up the river towards Prince's Landing-stage in the chilly atmosphere of early morning it was at once evident that more than the members of the deputation who had arranged to present addresses to Carson were out to welcome him to Liverpool, and when the workers who thronged the river bank started singing "O God, our help in ages past," the sound was strangely familiar in ears fresh from Ulster.

An address from the Unionist working men of Liverpool and district, presented by Alderman Salvidge, thanked Carson for his "magnificent efforts to preserve the integrity of the Empire," and assured him that they, "Unionist workers of the port which is connected with Belfast in so many ways, stand by Ulster in this great struggle." Scenes of intense enthusiasm in the streets culminated in a monster demonstration in Shiel Park, at which it was estimated that close on 200,000 people were present. In all the speeches delivered and the resolutions adopted during this memorable Liverpool visit the same note was sounded, of full approval of the Covenanters and of determination to support them whatever might befall.

The events of the last three months, and especially the signing of the Covenant, had concentrated on Ulster the attention of the whole United Kingdom, not to speak of America and the British oversea Dominions. This was not of unmixed advantage to the cause for which Ulster was making so determined a stand. There was a tendency more and more to regard the opposition to Irish Home Rule as an Ulster question, and nothing else. The Unionist protagonists of the earlier, the Gladstonian, period of the struggle, men like Salisbury, Randolph Churchill, Devonshire, Chamberlain, and Goschen, had treated it mainly as an Imperial question, which it certainly was. In their

eyes the Irish Loyalists, of whom the Ulstermen were the most important merely because they happened to be geographically concentrated, were valuable allies in a contest vital to the safety and prosperity of the British Empire; but, although the particular interests of these Loyalists were recognised as possessing a powerful claim on British sympathy and support, this was a consideration quite secondary in comparison with the larger aspects of Imperial policy raised by the demand for Home Rule. It was an unfortunate result of the prominence into which Ulster was forced after the introduction of Mr. Asquith's measure that these larger aspects gradually dropped away, and the defence of the Union came to be identified almost completely in England and Scotland with support of the Ulster Loyalists. It was to this aspect of the case that Mr. Kipling gave prominence in the poem published on the day of the Balmoral meeting,[1] although no one was less prone than he to magnify a "side-show" in Imperial policy; and it was the same note that again was sounded on the eve of the Covenant by another distinguished English poet. The general feeling of bewilderment and indignation that the only part of Ireland which had consistently upheld the British connection should now be not only thrown over by the British Government but denounced for its obstinate refusal to co-operate in a separatist movement, was finely expressed in Mr. William Watson's challenging poem, "Ulster's Reward," which appeared in *The Times* a few days before the signing of the Covenant in Belfast:

"What is the wage the faithful earn?
What is a recompense fair and meet?
Trample their fealty under your feet—
That is a fitting and just return.
Flout them, buffet them, over them ride,
Fling them aside!

"Ulster is ours to mock and spurn,
Ours to spit upon, ours to deride.
And let it be known and blazoned wide
That this is the wage the faithful earn:
Did she uphold us when others defied?
Then fling her aside.

[1] See *ante*, p. 79.

"Where on the Earth was the like of it done
In the gaze of the sun?
She had pleaded and prayed to be counted still
As one of our household through good and ill,
And with scorn they replied;
Jeered at her loyalty, trod on her pride,
Spurned her, repulsed her,
Great-hearted Ulster;
Flung her aside."

Appreciating to the full the sympathy and support which their cause received from leading men of letters in England, it was not the fault of the Ulstermen themselves that the larger Imperial aspects of the question thus dropped into the background. They continually strove to make Englishmen realise that far more was involved than loyal support of England's only friends in Ireland; they quoted such pronouncements as Admiral Mahan's that "it is impossible for a military man, or a statesman with appreciation of military conditions, to look at a map and not perceive that if the ambition of the Irish Separatists were realised, it would be even more threatening to the national life of Britain than the secession of the South was to that of the American Republic. . . . An independent Parliament could not safely be trusted even to avowed friends"; and they showed over and over again, quoting chapter and verse from Nationalist utterances, and appealing to acknowledged facts in recent and contemporary history, that it was not to "avowed friends," but to avowed enemies, that Mr. Asquith was prepared to concede an independent Parliament.

But those were the days before the rude awakening from the dream that the world was to repose for ever in the soft wrappings of universal peace. Questions of national defence bored Englishmen. The judgment of the greatest strategical authority of the age weighed less than one of Lord Haldane's verbose platitudes, and the urgent warnings of Lord Roberts less than the impudent snub administered to him by an Under-Secretary. Speakers on public platforms found that sympathy with Ulster carried a more potent appeal to their audience than any other they could make on the Irish question, and they naturally therefore concentrated attention upon it.

Liberals, excited alternately to fury and to ridicule by the proceedings in Belfast, heaped denunciation on Carson and the Covenant, thereby impelling their opponents to vehement defence of both; and the result of all this was that before the end of 1912 the sun of Imperial policy which had drawn the homage of earlier defenders of the Union was almost totally eclipsed by the moon of Ulster.

When Parliament reassembled for the autumn session in October the Prime Minister immediately moved a "guillotine" resolution for allotting time for the remaining stages of the Home Rule Bill, and, in resisting this motion, Mr. Bonar Law made one of the most convincing of his many convincing speeches against the whole policy of the Bill. It stands for all time as the complete demonstration of a proposition which he argued over and over again—that Home Rule had never been submitted to the British electorate, and that that fact alone was full justification for Ulster's resolve to resist it. It was impossible for any democratic Minister to refute the contention that even if the principle of the Government's policy had been as frankly submitted to the electorate as it had in fact been carefully withheld, it would still remain true that the intensity of the Ulster opposition was itself a new factor in the situation upon which the people were entitled to be consulted. There was a limit, said Mr. Bonar Law, to the obligation to submit to legally constituted authority, and that limit was reached "in a free country when a body of men, whether they call themselves a Cabinet or not, propose to make a great change like this for which they have never received the sanction of the people."

It was, however, thoroughly understood by every member of the House of Commons that argument, no matter how irrefutable, had no effect on the situation, which was governed by the simple fact that the life of the Ministry depended on the good-will of the Nationalist section of the Coalition, which rigorously demanded the passage of the Bill in the current session, and feared nothing so much as the judgment of the English people upon it. Consequently, under the guillotine, great blocks of the Bill, containing the most far-reaching constitutional issues,

and matters vital to the political and economic structure of the centre of the British Empire, were passed through the House of Commons by the ringing of the division bells without a word of discussion, exactly as they had come from the pen of the official draftsman, and destined under the exigencies of the Parliament Act procedure to be forced through the Legislature in the same raw condition in the two following sessions.

This last-mentioned fact suggested a consideration which weighed heavily on the minds of the Ulster leaders as the year 1912 drew to a close, and with it the debates on the Bill in Committee. Had the time come when they ought to put forward in Parliament an alternative policy to the absolute rejection of the Bill? They had not yet completely abandoned hope that Ministers, however reluctantly, might still find it impossible to stave off an appeal to the country; but the opposite hypothesis was the more probable. If the Bill became law in its present form they would have to fall back on the policy disclosed at Craigavon and embodied in the Covenant. But, although it is true that they had supported Mr. Agar-Robartes's amendment to exclude certain Ulster counties from the jurisdiction to be set up in Dublin, the Ulster representatives were reluctant to make proposals of their own which might be misrepresented as a desire to compromise their hostility to the principle of Home Rule. Under the Parliament Act procedure, however, they realised that no material change would be allowed to be made in the Bill after it first left the House of Commons, although two years would have to elapse before it could reach the Statute-book; if they were to propound any alternative to "No Home Rule" it was, therefore, a case of now or never.

Having regard to the extreme gravity of the course to be followed in Ulster in the event of the measure passing into law, it was decided that the most honest and straightforward thing to do was to put forward at the juncture now reached a policy for dealing with Ulster separately from the rest of Ireland. But in fulfilment of the promise, from which he never deviated, to take no important step

without first consulting his supporters in Ulster, Carson went over to attend a meeting of the Standing Committee in Belfast on the 13th of December, where he explained fully the reasons why this policy was recommended by himself and all his parliamentary colleagues. It was not accepted by the Standing Committee without considerable discussion, but in the end the decision was unanimous, and the resolution adopting it laid it down that " in taking this course the Standing Committee firmly believes the interests of Unionists in the three other provinces of Ireland will be best conserved." In order to emphasise that the course resolved upon implied no compromise of their opposition to the Bill as a whole, Sir Edward Carson wrote a letter to the Prime Minister during the Christmas recess, which was published in the Press, and which made this point clear ; and he pressed it home in the House of Commons on the 1st of January, 1913, when he moved to exclude " the Province of Ulster " from the operation of the Bill in a speech of wonderfully persuasive eloquence which deeply impressed the House, and which was truly described by Mr. Asquith as " very powerful and moving," and by Mr. Redmond as " serious and solemn."

Carson's proposal was altogether different from what was subsequently enacted in 1920. It was consistent with the uninterrupted demand of Ulster to be let alone, it asked for no special privilege, except the privilege, which was also claimed as an inalienable right, to remain a part of the United Kingdom with full representation at Westminster and nowhere else ; it required the creation of no fresh subordinate constitution raising the difficult question as to the precise area which its jurisdiction could effectively administer.

Carson's amendment was, of course, rejected by the Government's invariably docile majority, and on the 16th of January the Home Rule Bill passed the third reading in the House of Commons, without the smallest concession having been made to the Ulster opposition, or the slightest indication as to how the Government intended to meet the opposition of a different character which was being organised in the North of Ireland.

When the Bill went to the Upper House at the end of January the whole subject was threshed out in a series of exceedingly able speeches; but the impotence of the Second Chamber under the Parliament Act gave an air of pathetic unreality to the proceedings, which was neatly epitomised by Lord Londonderry in the sentence: "The position is, that while the House of Commons can vote but not speak, the Lords can speak but not vote." Nevertheless, such speeches as those of the Archbishop of York, Earl Grey, the Duke of Devonshire, and Lord Londonderry, were not without effect on opinion outside. Earl Grey, an admitted authority on federal constitutions, urged that if, as the Government were continually assuring the country, Home Rule was the first step in the federalisation of the United Kingdom, there was every reason why Ulster should be a distinct unit in the federal system. The Archbishop dealt more fully with the Ulster question. Admitting that he had formerly believed "that this attitude of Ulster was something of a scarecrow made up out of old and outworn prejudices," he had now to acknowledge that the men of Ulster were "of all men the least likely to be 'drugged with the wine of words,' and were men who of all other men mean and do what they say." Behind all the glowing eloquence of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Redmond, he discerned "this figure of Ulster, grim, determined, menacing, which no eloquence can exorcise and no live statesmanship can ignore." If the result of this legislation should be actual bloodshed, then, on whomsoever might rest the responsibility for it, it would mean the shattering of all the hopes of a united and contented Ireland which it was the aim of the Bill to create. If Ulster made good her threat of forcible resistance there was, said the Archbishop, one condition, and one condition only, on which her coercion could be justified, and that was that the Government "should have received from the people of this country an authority clear and explicit" to carry it out.

But among the numerous striking passages in the debate which occupied the Peers for four days, none was more telling than Lord Curzon's picturesque description of how

Ulster was to be treated. " You are compelling Ulster," he said, " to divorce her present husband, to whom she is not unfaithful, and you compel her to marry someone else whom she cordially dislikes, with whom she does not want to live; and you do it because she happens to be rich, and because her new partner has a large and ravenous offspring to provide for. You are asking rather too much of human nature."

That the Home Rule Bill would be rejected on second reading by the Lords was a foregone conclusion, and it was so rejected by a majority of 257 on the 31st of January, 1913. The Bill then entered into its period of gestation under the Parliament Act. The session did not come to an end until the 7th of March, and the new session began three days afterwards. It is unnecessary to follow the fortunes of the Bill in Parliament in 1913, for the process was purely mechanical, in order to satisfy the requirements of the Parliament Act. The preparations for dealing with the mischief it would work went forward with unflagging energy elsewhere.

CHAPTER XII

WAS RESISTANCE JUSTIFIABLE ?

A STORY is told of Queen Victoria that in her youthful days, when studying constitutional history, she once asked Lord Melbourne whether under any circumstances citizens were justified in resisting legal authority; to which the old courtier replied: "When asked that question by a Sovereign of the House of Hanover I feel bound to answer in the affirmative." If one can imagine a similar question being asked of an Ulsterman by Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, or Sir Edward Grey, in 1912, the reply would surely have been that such a question asked by a statesman claiming to be a guardian of Liberal principles and of the Whig tradition could only be answered in the affirmative. This, at all events, was the view of the late Duke of Devonshire, who more than any other statesman of our time could claim to be a representative in his own person of the Whig tradition handed down from 1688.[1] Passive obedience has, indeed, been preached as a political dogma in the course of English history, but never by apostles of Liberalism. Forcible resistance to legally constituted authority, even when it involved repudiation of existing allegiance, has often, both in our own and in foreign countries, won the approval and sympathy of English Liberals. A long line of illustrious names, from Cromwell and Lord Halifax in England to Kossuth and Mazzini on the Continent, might be quoted in support of such a proposition if anyone were likely to challenge it.

When, then, Liberals professed to be unutterably shocked by Ulster's declared intention to resist Home Rule both actively and passively, they could not have based their attitude on the principle that under no circumstances

[1] See *Life of the Eighth Duke of Devonshire*, by Bernard Holland, ii, pp. 249–51.

could such resistance be morally justified. Indeed, in the case in question, there were circumstances that would have made the condemnation of Ulster by the English Liberal Party not a little hypocritical if referred to any general ethical principle. For that party had itself been for a generation in the closest political alliance with Irishmen whose leader had boasted that they were as much rebels as their fathers were in 1798, and whose power in Ireland had been built up by long-sustained and systematic defiance of the law. Yet the same politicians who had excused, if they had not applauded, the "Plan of Campaign," and the organised boycotting and cattle-driving which had for years characterised the agitation for Home Rule, were unspeakably shocked when Ulster formed a disciplined Volunteer force which never committed an outrage, and prepared to set up a Provisional Government rather than be ruled by an assembly of cattle-drivers in Dublin. Moreover, many of Mr. Asquith's supporters, and one at least of his most distinguished colleagues in the Cabinet of 1912, had themselves organised resistance to an Education Act which they disliked but had been unable to defeat in Parliament.

Nevertheless, it must, of course, be freely admitted that the question as to what conditions justify resistance to the legal authority in the State—or rebellion, if the more blunt expression be preferred—is an exceedingly difficult one to answer. It would sound cynical to say, though Carlyle hardly shrinks from maintaining, that success, and success alone, redeems rebellion from wickedness and folly. Yet it would be difficult to explain on any other principle why posterity has applauded the Parliamentarians of 1643 and the Whigs of 1688, while condemning Monmouth and Charles Edward; or why Mr. Gladstone sympathised with Jefferson Davis when he looked like winning and withdrew that sympathy when he had lost. But if success is not the test, what is? Is it the aim of the men who resist? The aim that appears honourable and heroic to one onlooker appears quite the opposite to another, and so the test resolves itself into a matter of personal partisanship.

That is probably as near as one can get to a solution of the question. Those who happen to agree with the purpose for which a rebellion takes place think the rebels in the right; those who disagree think them in the wrong. As Mr. Winston Churchill succinctly puts it when commenting on the strictures passed on his father for "inciting" Ulster to resist Home Rule, "Constitutional authorities will measure their censures according to their political opinions." He reminds us, moreover, that when Lord Randolph was denounced as a "rebel in the skin of a Tory," the latter "was able to cite the authority of Lord Althorp, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Morley, and the Prime Minister (Gladstone) himself, in support of the contention that circumstances might justify morally, if not technically, violent resistance and even civil war." [1]

To this distinguished catalogue of authorities an Ulster apologist might have added the name of the Chief Secretary for Ireland in Mr. Asquith's own Cabinet, who admitted in 1912 that "if the religion of the Protestants were oppressed or their property despoiled they would be right to fight [2]; " which meant that Mr. Birrell did not condemn fighting in itself, provided he were allowed to decide when the occasion for it had arisen. Greater authorities than Mr. Birrell held that the Ulster case for resistance was a good and valid one as it stood. No English statesman of the last half-century has deservedly enjoyed a higher reputation for political probity, combined with sound common sense, than the eighth Duke of Devonshire. As long ago as 1893, when this same issue had already been raised in circumstances much less favourable to Ulster than after the passing of the Parliament Act in 1911, the Duke of Devonshire said:

"The people of Ulster believe, rightly or wrongly, that under a Government responsible to an Imperial Parliament they possess at present the fullest security which they can possess of their personal freedom, their liberties, and their right to transact their own business in their own way. You have no right to offer them any inferior security to

[1] *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii, p. 65.
[2] *Annual Register*, 1912, p. 82.

that; and if, after weighing the character of the Government which it is sought to impose upon them, they resolve that they are no longer bound to obey a law which does not give them equal and just protection with their fellow subjects, who can say—how at all events can the descendants of those who resisted King James II say, that they have not a right, if they think fit, to resist, if they think they have the power, the imposition of a Government put upon them by force?" [1]

All the same, there never was a community on the face of the earth to whom "rebellion" in any real sense of the word was more hateful than to the people of Ulster. They traditionally were the champions of "law and order" in Ireland; they prided themselves above all things on their "loyalty" to their King and to the British flag. And they never entertained the idea that the movement which they started at Craigavon in 1911, and to which they solemnly pledged themselves by their Covenant in the following year, was in the slightest degree a departure from their cherished "loyalty"—on the contrary, it was an emphatic assertion of it. They held firmly, as Mr. Bonar Law and the whole Unionist party in Great Britain held also, that Mr. Asquith and his Government were forcing Home Rule upon them by unconstitutional methods. They did not believe that loyalty in the best sense—loyalty to the Sovereign, to the Empire, to the majesty of the law—required of them passive obedience to an Act of Parliament placed by such means on the Statute-book, which they were convinced, moreover, was wholly repugnant to the great majority of the British people.

This aspect of the matter was admirably and soberly presented by *The Times* in one of the many weighty articles in which that great journal gave undeviating support to the Ulster cause.

"A free community cannot justly, or even constitutionally, be deprived of its privileges or its position in the realm by any measure that is not stamped with the considered and unquestionable approval of the great body of electors of the United Kingdom. Any attempt so to

[1] Bernard Holland's *Life of the Eighth Duke of Devonshire*, ii, 250.

deprive them is a fraud upon their fundamental rights, which they are justified in resisting, as an act of violence, by any means in their power. This is elementary doctrine, borne out by the whole course of English history." [1]

That the position was paradoxical calls for no denial; but the pith of the paradox lay in the fact that a movement denounced as "rebellious" by its political opponents was warmly supported not only by large masses, probably by the majority, of the people of this country, but by numbers of individuals of the highest character, occupying stations of great responsibility. Whatever may be thought of men engaged in actual political conflict, whom some people appear to think capable of any wickedness, no one can seriously suggest that men like Lord Macnaghten, like the late and present Primates of Ireland, like the late Provost of Trinity, like many other sober thinkers who supported Ulster, were men who would lightly lend themselves to "rebellion," or any other wild and irresponsible adventure. As *The Times* very truly observed in a leading article in 1912:

"We remember no precedent in our domestic history since the Revolution of 1688 for a movement among citizens, law-abiding by temperament and habit, which resembles the present movement of the Ulster Protestants. It is no rabble who have undertaken it. It is the work of orderly, prosperous, and deeply religious men." [2]

Nor did the paradox end there. If the Ulster Movement was "rebellious," its purpose was as paradoxical as its circumstances. It had in it no subversive element. In this respect it stands (so far as the writer's knowledge goes) without precedent, a solitary instance in the history of mankind. The world has witnessed rebellions without number, designed to bring about many different results—to emancipate a people from oppression, to upset an obnoxious form of Government, to expel or to restore a rival dynasty, to transfer allegiance from one Sovereign

[1] *The Times*, July 14th, 1913.
[2] Ibid., August 22nd, 1912.

or one State to another. But has there ever been a "rebellion" the object of which was to maintain the *status quo*? Yet that was the sole purpose of the Ulstermen in all they did from 1911 to 1914. That fact, which distinguished their movement from every rebellion or revolution in history, placed them on a far more solid ground of reasonable justification than the excuse offered by Mr. Churchill for their bellicose attitude in his father's day. Although he is no doubt right in saying that "When men are sufficiently in earnest they will back their words with more than votes," it is a plea that would cover alike the conduct of Halifax and the other Whigs who resisted the legal authority of James II, of the Jacobites who fought for his grandson, and of the contrivers of many another bloody or bloodless Revolution. But there was nothing revolutionary in the Ulster Movement. It was resistance to the transfer of a people's allegiance without their consent; to their forcible expulsion from a Constitution with which they were content and their forcible inclusion in a Constitution which they detested. This was the very antithesis of Revolution. English Radical writers and politicians might argue that no "transfer of allegiance" was contemplated; but Ulstermen thought they knew better, and the later development of the Irish question proved how right they were. Even had they been proved wrong instead of right in their conviction that the true aim of Irish Nationalism (a term in which Sinn Fein is included) was essentially separatist, they knew better than Englishmen how little reality there was in the theory that under the proposed Home Rule their allegiance would be unaffected and their political *status* suffer no degradation. They claimed to occupy a position similar to that of the North in the American Civil War—with this difference, which, so far as it went, told in their favour, that whereas Lincoln took up arms to resist secession, they were prepared to do so to resist expulsion, the purpose in both cases, however, being to preserve union. The practical view of the question, as it would appear in the eyes of ordinary men, was well expressed by Lord Curzon in the House of Lords, when he said:

"The people of this country will be very loth to condemn those whose only disloyalty it will be to have been excessive in their loyalty to the King. Do not suppose that the people of this country will call those 'rebels' whose only form of rebellion is to insist on remaining under the Imperial Parliament." [1]

Of course, men like Sir Edward Carson, Lord Londonderry, Mr. Thomas Sinclair, and other Ulster leaders were too far-seeing not to realise that the course they were taking would expose them to the accusation of having set a bad example which others without the same grounds of justification might follow in very different circumstances. But this was a risk they had to shoulder, as have all who are not prepared to subscribe to the dogma of Passive Obedience without limit. They accepted it as the less of two evils. But there was something humorous in the pretence put forward in 1916 and afterwards that the violence to which the adherents of Sinn Fein had recourse was merely copying Ulster. As if Irish Nationalism in its extreme form required precedent for insurrection! Even the leader of "Constitutional Nationalism" himself had traced his political pedigree to convicted rebels like Tone and Emmet, and since the date of those heroes there had been at least two armed risings in Ireland against the British Crown and Government. If the taunt flung at Ulstermen had been that they had at last thrown overboard law and order and had stolen the Nationalist policy of active resistance, there would at least have been superficial plausibility in it. But when it was suggested or implied that the Ulster example was actually responsible in any degree whatever for violent outbreaks in the other provinces, a supercilious smile was the only possible retort from the lips of representatives of Ulster.

But what caused them some perplexity was the disposition manifested in certain quarters in England to look upon the two parties in Ireland in regard to "rebellion" as "six of one and half a dozen of the other." It has always, unhappily, been characteristic of a certain type of Englishman to see no difference between the friends and

[1] *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Lords), July 15th, 1913.

the enemies of his country, and, if he has a preference at all, to give it to the latter. Apart from all other circumstances which in the eyes of Ulstermen justified them up to the hilt in the policy they pursued, apart from everything that distinguished them historically and morally from Irish "rebels," there was the patent and all-important fact that the motive of their opponents was hostility to England, whereas their own motive was friendliness and loyalty to England. In that respect they never wavered. If the course of events had ever led to the employment of British troops to crush the resistance of Ulster to Home Rule, the extraordinary spectacle would have been presented to the wondering world of the King's soldiers shooting down men marching under the British flag and singing "God save the King."

It was no doubt because this was very generally understood in England that the sympathies of large masses of law-loving people were never for a moment alienated from the men of Ulster by all the striving of their enemies to brand them as rebels. Constitutional authorities may, as Mr. Churchill says, "measure their censures according to their political opinions," but the generality of men, who are not constitutional authorities, whose political opinions, if they have any, are fluctuating, and who care little for "juridical niceties," will measure their censures according to their instinctive sympathies. And the sound instinct of Englishmen forbade them to blame men who, if rebels in law, were their firm friends in fact, for taking exceptional and even illegal measures, when all others failed, to preserve the full unity which they regarded as the fruit of that friendship.

CHAPTER XIII

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND PROPAGANDA

By the death of the Duke of Abercorn on the 3rd of January, 1913, the Ulster Loyalists lost a leader who had for many years occupied a very special place in their affection and confidence. Owing to failing health he had been unable to take an active part in the exciting events of the past two years, but the messages of encouragement and support which were read from him at Craigavon, Balmoral, and other meetings for organising resistance, were always received with an enthusiasm which showed, and was intended to show, that the great part he had played in former years, and especially his inspiring leadership as Chairman of the Ulster Convention in 1893, had never been forgotten.

His death inflicted also, indirectly, another blow which at this particular moment was galling to loyalists out of all proportion to its intrinsic importance. The removal to the House of Lords of the Marquis of Hamilton, the member for Derry city, created a vacancy which was filled at the ensuing by-election by a Liberal Home Ruler. To lose a seat anywhere in the north-eastern counties at such a critical time in the movement was bad enough, but the unfading halo of the historic siege rested on Derry as on a sanctuary of Protestantism and loyalty, so that the capture of the "Maiden City" by the enemy wounded loyalist sentiment far more deeply than the loss of any other constituency. The two parties had been for some time very nearly evenly balanced there, and every electioneering art and device, including that of bringing to the poll voters who had long rested in the cemetery, was practised in Derry with unfailing zeal and zest by party managers. For some time past trade, especially shipbuilding, had been in a state of depression in Derry, with

the result that a good many of the better class of artisans, who were uniformly Unionist, had gone to Belfast and elsewhere to find work, leaving the political fortunes of the city at the mercy of the casual labourer who drifted in from the wilds of Donegal, and who at this election managed to place the Home Rule candidate in a majority of fifty-seven.

It was a matter of course that the late Duke's place as President of the Ulster Unionist Council should be taken by Lord Londonderry, and it happened that the annual meeting at which he was formally elected was held on the same day that witnessed the rejection of the Home Rule Bill by the House of Lords.

It was also at this annual meeting (31st January, 1913) that the special Commission who had been charged to prepare a scheme for the Provisional Government, presented their draft Report. The work had been done with great thoroughness and was adopted without substantial alteration by the Council, but was not made public for several months. The Council itself was, in the event of the Provisional Government being set up, to constitute a "Central Authority," and provision was made, with complete elaboration of detail, for carrying on all the necessary departments of administration by different Committees and Boards, whose respective functions were clearly defined. Among those who consented to serve in these departmental Committees, in addition to the recognised local leaders in the Ulster Movement, were Dr. Crozier, Archbishop of Armagh, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Lord Charles Beresford, Major-General Montgomery, Colonel Thomas Hickman, M.P., Lord Claud Hamilton, M.P., Sir Robert Kennedy, K.C.M.G., and Sir Charles Macnaghten, K.C., son of Lord Macnaghten, the distinguished Lord of Appeal. Ulster at this time gave a lead on the question of admitting women to political power, at a time when their claim to enfranchisement was being strenuously resisted in England, by including several women in the Provisional Government.

A most carefully drawn scheme for a separate judiciary

in Ulster had been prepared with the assistance of some of the ablest lawyers in Ireland. It was in three parts, dealing respectively with (*a*) the Supreme Court, (*b*) the Land Commission, and (*c*) County Courts; it was drawn up as an Ordinance, in the usual form of a Parliamentary Bill, and it is an indication of the spirit in which Ulster was preparing to resist an Act of Parliament that the Ordinance bore the introductory heading: "*It is Hereby Enacted by the Central Authority in the name of the King's Most Excellent Majesty that*——" Similarly, the form of "Oath or Declaration of Adherence" to be taken by Judges, Magistrates, Coroners, and other officers of the Courts, set out in a Schedule to the Ordinance, was: "I . . . of . . . being about to serve in the Courts of the Provisional Government as the Central Authority for His Majesty the King, etc."

It will be remembered that the original resolution by which the Council decided to set up a Provisional Government limited its duration until Ulster should "again resume unimpaired her citizenship in the United Kingdom,"[1] and at a later date it was explicitly stated that it was to act as trustee for the Imperial Parliament. All the forms prepared for use while it remained in being purported to be issued in the name of the King. And the Resolution adopted by the Unionist Council immediately after constituting itself the Central Authority of the Provisional Government, in which the reasons for that policy were recorded, concluded with the statement that "we, for our part, in the course we have determined to pursue, are inspired not alone by regard to the true welfare of our own country, but by devotion to the interests of our world-wide Empire and loyalty to our beloved King." If this was the language of rebels, it struck a note that can never before have been heard in a chorus of disaffection.

The demonstrations against the Government's policy which had been held during the last eighteen months, of which some account has been given, were so impressive that those which followed were inevitably less remarkable

[1] See *ante*, p. 53.

by comparison. They were, too, necessarily to a large extent, repetitions of what had gone before. There might be, and there were, plenty of variations on the old theme, but there was no new theme to introduce. Propaganda to the extent possible with the resources at the disposal of the Ulster Unionist Council was carried on in the British constituencies in 1913, the cost being defrayed chiefly through generous subscriptions collected by the energy and influence of Mr. Walter Long; but many were beginning to share the opinion of Mr. Charles Craig, M.P., who scandalised the Radicals by saying at Antrim in March that, while it was incumbent on Ulstermen to do their best to educate the electorate, "he believed that, as an argument, ten thousand pounds spent on rifles would be a thousand times stronger than the same amount spent on meetings, speeches, and pamphlets."

On the 27th of March a letter appeared in the London newspapers announcing the formation of a "British League for the support of Ulster and the Union," with an office in London. It was signed by a hundred Peers and 120 Unionist Members of the House of Commons. The manifesto emphasised the Imperial aspect of the great struggle that was going on, asserting that it was "quite clear that the men of Ulster are not fighting only for their own liberties. Ulster will be the field on which the privileges of the whole nation will be lost or won." A small executive Committee was appointed, with the Duke of Bedford as Chairman, and within a few weeks large numbers of people in all parts of the country joined the new organisation. A conference attended by upwards of 150 honorary agents from all parts of the country was held at Londonderry House on the 4th of June, where the work of the League was discussed, and its future policy arranged. Its operations were not ostentatious, but they were far from being negligible, especially in connection with later developments of the movement in the following year. This proof of British support was most encouraging to the people of Ulster, and the Dublin correspondent of *The Times* reported that it gave no less satisfaction to loyalists in other parts of Ireland, among whom, as the position

became more desperate every day, there was "not the least sign of giving way, of accepting the inevitable."

Every month that passed in uncertainty as to what fate was reserved for Ulster, and especially every visit of the leader to Belfast, endeared him more intensely to his followers, who had long since learnt to give him their unquestioning trust; and his bereavement by the death of his wife in April 1913 brought him the profound and affectionate sympathy of a warm-hearted people, which manifested itself in most moving fashion at a great meeting a month later on the 16th of May, when, at the opening of a new drill hall in the most industrial district of Belfast, Sir Edward exclaimed, in response to a tumultuous reception, "Heaven knows, my one affection left me is my love of Ireland."

He took occasion at the same meeting to impress upon his followers the spirit by which all their actions should be guided, and which always guided his own. With a significant reference to the purposes for which the new drill hall might be used, he added, "Always remember—this is essential—always remember you have no quarrel with individuals. We welcome and we love every individual Irishman, even though he may be opposed to us. Our quarrel is with the Government." When the feelings of masses of men are deeply stirred in political conflict such exhortations are never superfluous; and there never was a leader who could give them with better grace than Sir Edward Carson, who himself combined to an extraordinary degree strength of conviction with entire freedom from bitterness towards individual opponents.[1]

In this same speech he showed that there was no slackening of determination to pursue to the end the policy of the Covenant. There had been rumours that the Government were making secret inquiries with a view to taking legal proceedings, and in allusion to them Carson moved his audience to one of the most wonderful demonstrations of personal devotion that even he ever evoked, by saying: "If they want to test the legality of anything we are

[1] But he could be moved to stern indignation by the treachery of former friends, as he showed in December 1921.

doing, let them not attack humble men—I am responsible for everything, and they know where to find me."

The Bill was running its course for the second time through Parliament, a course that was now farcically perfunctory, and Carson returned to London to repeat in the House of Commons on the 10th of June his defiant acceptance of responsibility for the Ulster preparations. He was back in Belfast for the 12th of July celebrations, when 150,000 Orangemen assembled at Craigavon to hear another speech from their leader full of confident challenge, and to receive another message of encouragement from Mr. Bonar Law, who assured them that "whatever steps they might feel compelled to take, whether they were constitutional, or whether in the long run they were unconstitutional, they had the whole of the Unionist Party under his leadership behind them."

The leader of the Unionist Party had good reason to know that his message to Ulster was endorsed by his followers. That had been demonstrated beyond all possibility of doubt during the preceding month. The Ulster Unionist Members of the House of Commons, with Carson at their head, had during June made a tour of some of the principal towns of Scotland and the North of England, receiving a resounding welcome wherever they went. The usual custom of political meetings, where one or two prominent speakers have the platform to themselves, was departed from; the whole parliamentary contingent kept together throughout the tour as a deputation from Ulster to the constituencies visited, taking in turn the duty of supporting Carson, who was everywhere the principal speaker.

There were wonderful demonstrations at Glasgow and Edinburgh, both in the streets and the principal halls, proving, as was aptly said by *The Yorkshire Post*, that "the cry of the new Covenanters is not unheeded by the descendants of the old"; and thence they went south, drawing great cheering crowds to welcome them and to present encouraging addresses at the railway stations at Berwick, Newcastle, Darlington, and York, to Leeds, where the two largest buildings in the city were packed to over-

flowing with Yorkshiremen eager to see and hear the Ulster leader, and to show their sympathy with the loyalist cause. Similar scenes were witnessed at Norwich and Bristol, and the tour left no doubt in the minds of those who followed it, and who studied the comments of the Press upon it, that not only was the whole Unionist Party in Great Britain solidly behind the Ulstermen in their resolve to resist being subjected to a Parliament in Dublin, but that the general drift of opinion detached from party was increasingly on the same side.

CHAPTER XIV

LORD LOREBURN'S LETTER

WHATEVER might be the state of public opinion in England, it was realised that the Government, if they chose, were in a position to disregard it; and in Ulster the tension was becoming almost unbearable. The leaders were apprehensive lest outbreaks of violence should occur, which they knew would gravely prejudice the movement; and there is no doubt that it was only the discipline which the rank and file had now gained, and the extraordinary restraining influence which Carson exercised, that prevented serious rioting in many places. Incidents like the attack by Nationalist roughs in Belfast on a carriage conveying crippled children to a holiday outing on the 31st of May because it was decorated with Union Jacks might at any moment lead to trouble. There was some disorder in Belfast in the early hours of the 12th of July; and an outbreak occurred in August in Derry, always a storm centre, when a procession was attacked, and a Protestant was shot while watching it from his own upper window. The incident started rioting, which continued for several days, and a battalion of troops had to be called in to restore order.

Meantime, throughout the summer, while the Government were complacently carrying their Bill through Parliament for the second time, the Press was packed with suggestions for averting the crisis which everybody except the Cabinet recognised as impending.

It began to be whispered in the clubs and lobbies that the King might exercise the prerogative of veto, and even men like Lord St. Aldwyn and the veteran Earl of Halsbury, both of them ex-Cabinet Ministers, encouraged the idea; but there was no widespread acceptance of the notion that

even in so exceptional a case His Majesty would reject the advice of his responsible Ministers. But in a letter to *The Times* on the 4th of September, Mr. George Cave, K.C., M.P. (afterwards Home Secretary, and ultimately Lord of Appeal), suggested that the King might " exercise his undoubted right " to dissolve Parliament before the beginning of the next session, in order to inform himself as to whether the policy of his Ministers was endorsed by the people.

But a much greater sensation was created a few days later by a letter which appeared in *The Times* on the 11th of the same month over the signature of Lord Loreburn. Lord Loreburn had been Lord Chancellor at the time the Home Rule Bill was first introduced, but had retired from the Government in June 1912, being replaced on the Woolsack by Lord Haldane. When the first draft of the Home Rule Bill was under discussion in the Cabinet in preparation for its introduction in the House of Commons, two of the younger Ministers, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill, proposed that an attempt should be made to avert the stern opposition to be expected from Ulster, by treating the northern Province, or a portion of it, separately from the rest of Ireland. This proposal was not acceptable to the Cabinet as a whole, and its authors were roundly rated by Lord Loreburn for so unprincipled a lapse from orthodox Gladstonian doctrine. What, therefore, must have been the astonishment of the heretics when they found their mentor, less than two years later, publicly reproving the Government which he had left for having got into such a sad mess over the Ulster difficulty ! They might be forgiven some indignation at finding themselves reproved by Lord Loreburn for faulty statesmanship of which Lord Loreburn was the principal author.

Those, however, who had not the same ground for exasperation as Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill thought Lord Loreburn's letter very sound sense. He pointed out that if the Bill were to become law in 1914, as it stood in September 1913, there would be, if not civil war, at any rate very serious rioting in the North of Ireland, and when the riots had been quelled by the Government the spirit

that prompted them would remain. Everybody concerned would suffer from fighting it out to a finish. The Ex-Chancellor felt bound to assume that "up to the last, Ministers, who assuredly have not taken leave of their senses, would be willing to consider proposals for accommodation," and he therefore suggested that a Conference should be held behind closed doors with a view to a settlement by consent. If Lord Loreburn had perceived at the time the draft Bill was before the Cabinet that it was not the Ministers who proposed separate treatment for Ulster who had "taken leave of their senses," but those, including himself, who had resisted that proposal, his wisdom would have been more timely; but it was better late than never, and his unexpected intervention had a decided influence on opinion in the country.

The comment of *The Times* was very much to the point:

"On the eve of a great political crisis, it may be of national disaster, a distinguished Liberal statesman makes public confession of his belief that, as a permanent solution, the Irish policy of the Government is indefensible."

This letter of the ex-Lord Chancellor gave rise to prolonged discussion in the Press and on the platform. At Durham, on the 13th of September, Carson declared that he would welcome a Conference if the question was how to provide a genuine expansion of self-government, but that, if Ulster was to be not only expelled from the Union but placed under a Parliament in Dublin, then "they were going to make Home Rule impossible by steady and persistent opposition." The Government seemed unable to agree whether a conciliatory or a defiant attitude was their wiser policy, though it is true that the latter recommended itself mostly to the least prominent of its members, such as Mr. J. M. Robertson, Secretary of the Board of Trade, who in a speech at Newcastle on the 25th of September announced scornfully that Ministers were not going to turn "King Carson" into "Saint Carson" by prosecuting him, and that "the Government would know how

to deal with him."[1] But more important Ministers were beginning to perceive the unwisdom of this sort of bluster. Lord Morley, in the House of Lords, denied that he had ever underrated the Ulster difficulty, and said that for twenty-five years he had never thought that Ulster was guilty of bluff. Mr. Churchill, at Dundee, on the 9th of October, no longer talked as he had the previous year about "not taking Sir Edward Carson too seriously," though he still appeared to be ignorant of the fact that there was in Ulster anybody except Orangemen. "The Orange Leaders," he said, "used violent language, but Liberals should try to understand their position. Their claim for special consideration, if put forward with sincerity, could not be ignored by a Government depending on the existing House."[2]

The Prime Minister, less assured than his subordinate at the Board of Trade that "King Carson" was negligible, also displayed a somewhat chastened spirit at Ladybank on the 25th of October, when he acknowledged that it was "of supreme importance to the future well-being of Ireland that the new system should not start with the apparent triumph of one section over another," and he invited a "free and frank exchange of views."[3] Sir Edward Grey held out another little twig of olive two days later at Berwick.

To these overtures, if they deserve the name, Mr. Bonar Law replied in an address to a gathering of fifteen thousand people at Wallsend on the 29th, in the presence of Sir Edward Carson. Having repeated the Blenheim pledge, he praised the discipline and restraint shown by the Ulster people and their leaders, but warned his hearers that the nation was drifting towards the tragedy of civil war, the responsibility for which would rest on the Government. He expressed his readiness to respond to Mr. Asquith's invitation, but pointed out that there were only three alternatives open to the Government. They must either (1) go on as they were doing and provoke Ulster to resist—that was madness; (2) they could consult the electorate,

[1] *Annual Register*, 1913, p. 205.
[2] Ibid., p. 209. [3] Ibid., p. 220.

whose decision would be accepted by the Unionist Party as a whole; or (3) they could try to arrange a settlement which would at least avert civil war.

There had been during the past six or eight months an unusual dearth of by-elections to test public opinion in regard to the Irish policy of the Government, and it must be borne in mind that the Unionist Party in Great Britain was still distracted by disputes over the Tariff question, which in January 1913 had very nearly led to the retirement of Mr. Bonar Law from the leadership. Nevertheless, in May the Unionists won two signal victories, one in Cambridgeshire, and one in Cheshire, where the Altrincham Division sent a staunch friend of Ulster to Parliament in the person of Mr. George C. Hamilton, who in his maiden speech declared that he had won the contest entirely on the Ulster Question. Even more significant, perhaps, were two elections which were fought while the interchange of party strokes over the Loreburn letter was in progress, and the results of both were declared on the 8th of November. At Reading, where the Unionists retained the seat, the Liberal candidate was constrained by pressure of opinion in the constituency to promise support for a policy of "separate and generous treatment for Ulster." At Linlithgow, a Liberal stronghold, where no such promise was forthcoming, the Liberal majority, in spite of a large Nationalist vote, was reduced by 1,500 votes as compared with the General Election. There were signs that Nonconformists, whose great leaders like Spurgeon and Dale had been hostile to Home Rule in Gladstone's time, were again becoming uneasy about handing over the Ulster Presbyterians and Methodists to the Roman hierarchy. A memorial against Home Rule, signed by 131,000 people, which had been presented to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in June, had no doubt had some effect on Nonconformist opinion in England, and it was just about the time when these elections took place that Carson was described at a large gathering of Nonconformists in London as "the best embodiment at this moment of the ancient spirit of Nonconformity." [1]

[1] *Annual Register*, 1913, p. 225.

Meanwhile the people in Ulster were steadily maturing their plans. The arrangements already mentioned for setting up a Provisional Government were confirmed and finally adopted by the Unionist Council in Belfast on the 24th of September, and the Council by resolution delegated its powers to the Standing Committee, while the Commission of Five was at the same time appointed to act as an Executive. Carson, in accepting the chairmanship of the Central Authority, used the striking phrase, which precisely epitomised the situation, that " Ulster might be coerced into submission, but in that case would have to be governed as a conquered country." The Nationalist retort that the rest of Ireland was now being so treated, appeared forcible to those Englishmen only who could see no difference between controlling a disaffected population and chastising a loyal one.

At the same meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council on the 24th of September a guarantee fund was established for providing means to compensate members of the U.V.F. for any loss or disability they might suffer as a result of their service, and the widows and dependents of any who might lose their lives. This was a matter that had caused Carson anxiety for some time. He was extremely sensitive to the moral responsibility he would incur towards those who so eagerly followed his lead, in the event of their suffering loss of life or limb in the service of Ulster. His proposal that a guarantee fund of a million sterling should be started, met with a ready response from the Council, and from the wealthier classes in and about Belfast. The form of " Indemnity Guarantee " provided for the payment to those entitled to benefit under it of sums not less than they would have been entitled to under the Fatal Accidents Act, the Employers' Liability Act, and the Workman's Compensation Act, as the circumstances of the case might be. The list was headed by Sir Edward Carson, Lord Londonderry, Captain Craig, Sir John Lonsdale, Sir George Clark, and Lord Dunleath, with a subscription of £10,000 each, and their example was followed by Mr. Kerr Smiley, M.P., Mr. R. M. Liddell, Mr. George Preston, Mr. Henry Musgrave, Mr. C. E. Allen,

and Mr. Frank Workman, who entered their names severally for the same amount. A quarter of a million sterling was guaranteed in the room before the Council separated; by the end of a week it had grown to £387,000; and before the 1st of January, 1914, the total amount of the Indemnity Guarantee Fund was £1,043,816.

It gave Carson and the other leaders the greatest possible satisfaction that the response to this appeal was so prompt and adequate. Not only was their anxiety relieved in regard to their responsibility to loyal followers of the rank and file who might become "casualties" in the movement, but they had been given a striking proof that the business community of Belfast did not consider its pocket more sacred than its principles. Moreover, if there had been doubt on that score in anyone's mind, it was set at rest by a memorable meeting for business men only held in Belfast on the 3rd of November. Between three and four thousand leaders of industry and commerce, the majority of whom had never hitherto taken any active share in political affairs, presided over by Mr. G. H. Ewart, President of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, gave an enthusiastic reception to Carson, who told them that he had come more to consult them as to the commercial aspects of the great political controversy than to impress his own views on the gathering. It was said that the men in the hall represented a capital of not less than £145,000,000 sterling,[1] and there can be no doubt that, even if that were an exaggerated estimate, they were not of a class to whom revolution, rebellion, or political upheaval could offer an attractive prospect. Nevertheless, the meeting passed with complete unanimity a resolution expressing confidence in Carson and approval of everything he had done, including the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and declaring that they would refuse to pay "all taxes which they could control" to an Irish Parliament in Dublin. This meeting was very satisfactory, for it proved that the "captains of industry" were entirely in accord with the working classes, whose support of the movement had never been in doubt. It

[1] *Annual Register*, 1913, p. 225.

showed that Ulster was solid behind Carson; and the unanimity was emphasised rather than disturbed by a little handful of cranks, calling themselves "Protestant Home Rulers," who met on the 24th of October at the village of Ballymoney "to protest against the lawless policy of Carsonism." The principal stickler for propriety of conduct in public life on this occasion was Sir Roger Casement.

While the unity and steadfastness—which enemies called obstinacy—of the Ulster people were being thus made manifest, the public in England were hearing a good deal about the growth of the Ulster Volunteer Force in numbers and efficiency. As will be seen later, the anniversary of the Covenant was celebrated with great military display at the very time when the newspapers across the Channel were busy discussing Lord Loreburn's letter, and at a parade service in the Ulster Hall, Canon Harding, after pronouncing the Benediction, called on the congregation to raise their right hands and pledge themselves thereby "to follow wherever Sir Edward Carson shall lead us."

The events of September 1913—the setting up of the Provisional Government, the wonderful and instantaneous response to the appeal for an Indemnity Guarantee Fund, the rapid formation of an effective volunteer army—were given the fullest publicity in the English Press. Every newspaper of importance had its special correspondent in Belfast, whose telegrams filled columns every day, adorned with all the varieties of sensational headline type. The Radicals were becoming restive. The idea that Carson was "not to be taken too seriously," had apparently missed fire. It was the Ministerial affectation of contempt that no one was taking seriously; in fact, to borrow an expression from current slang, the "King Carson" stunt was a "wash-out."

The Nation suggested that, instead of being laughed at, the Ulster leader should be prosecuted, or, at any rate, removed from the Privy Council, and other Liberal papers feverishly took up the suggestion, debating whether the indictment should be under the Treason Felony Act of

1848, the Crimes Act of 1887, or the Unlawful Drilling Act of 1819. One of them, however, which succeeded in keeping its head, did not believe that a prosecution would succeed; and, as to the Privy Council, if Carson's name were removed, what about Londonderry and F. E. Smith, Walter Long, and Bonar Law? In fact, "it would be difficult to know where to stop."[1] It would have been. The Privy Council would have had to be reduced to a committee of Radical politicians; and, if Carson had been prosecuted, room would have had to be found in the dock, not only for the whole Unionist Party, but for the proprietors and editors of most of the leading journals. The Government stopped short of that supreme folly; but their impotence was the measure of the prevailing sympathy with Ulster.

[1] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, September 22nd, 1913.

CHAPTER XV

PREPARATIONS AND PROPOSALS

We have seen in a former chapter how the Ulster Volunteer Force originated. It was never formally established by the act of any recognised authority, but rather grew spontaneously from the zeal of the Unionist Clubs and the Orange Lodges to present an effective and formidable appearance at the demonstrations which marked the progress of the movement after the meeting at Craigavon in 1911. By the following summer it had attained considerable numbers and respectable efficiency, and was becoming organised, without violation of the law, on a territorial basis under local officers, many of whom had served in the Army. Early in 1913 the Standing Committee resolved that these units should be combined into a single force, to be called The Ulster Volunteer Force, which was to be raised and limited to a strength of 100,000 men, all of whom should be men who had signed the Covenant.

When this organisation took place it became obvious that a serious defect was the want of a Commander-in-Chief of the whole force, to give it unity and cohesion. This defect was pressed on the attention of the leaders of the movement, who then began to look about for a suitable officer of rank and military experience to take command of the U.V.F. Among English Members of the House of Commons there was no firmer friend of Ulster than Colonel Thomas Hickman, C.B., D.S.O., who has been mentioned as one of those who consented to serve in the Provisional Government. Hickman had seen a lot of active service, having served with great distinction in Egypt and the Soudan under Kitchener, and in the South African War. It was natural to take him into confidence in the search for a general; and, when he was approached,

it was decided that he should consult Lord Roberts, whose warm sympathy with the Ulster cause was well known to the leaders of the movement, and whose knowledge of army officers of high rank was, of course, unequalled. Moreover, the illustrious Field-Marshal had dropped hints which led those concerned to conjecture that in the last resort he might not himself be unwilling to lend his matchless prestige and genius to the loyalist cause in Ireland. The contingency which might bring about such an accession had not, however, yet arisen, and might never arise; in the meantime, Lord Roberts gave a ready ear to Hickman's application, which, after some weeks of delay, he answered in the following letter, which was at once communicated to Carson and those in his immediate confidence:

"ENGLEMERE, ASCOT, BERKS.
"*4th June*, 1913.

"DEAR HICKMAN,

"I have been a long time finding a Senior Officer to help in the Ulster business, but I think I have got one now. His name is Lieut.-General Sir George Richardson, K.C.B., c/o Messrs. Henry S. King & Co., Pall Mall, S.W. He is a retired Indian officer, active and in good health. He is not an Irishman, but has settled in Ireland. . . . Richardson will be in London for about a month, and is ready to meet you at any time.

"I am sorry to read about the capture of rifles.

"Believe me,

"Yours sincerely,

"ROBERTS."

The matter was quickly arranged, and within a few weeks Sir George Richardson had taken up his residence in Belfast, and his duties as G.O.C. the Ulster Volunteer Force.

He was a distinguished soldier. He served under Roberts in the Afghan Campaign of 1879–80; he took part in the Waziri Expedition of 1881, and the Zhob Valley Field Force operations of 1890. He was in command of a Flying Column in the Tirah Expedition of 1897–8, and of a Cavalry Brigade in the China Expeditionary Force in 1900, and had commanded a Division

at Poona for three years before retiring in 1907. He had been three times mentioned in despatches, besides receiving a brevet and many medals and clasps. He was at this time sixty-six years of age, but, like the great soldier who recommended him to Ulster, he was an active little man both in body and mind, with no symptom of approaching old age.

General Richardson was not long in making himself popular, not only with the force under his command, but with all classes in Ulster. There were unavoidable difficulties in handling troops whose officers had no statutory powers of discipline, who had inherited no military traditions, and who formed part of a population conspicuously independent in character. But Sir George Richardson was as full of tact as of good humour, and he soon found that the keenness of the officers and men, to whom dismissal from the U.V.F. would have been the severest of punishments, more than counterbalanced the difficulties referred to.

When the new G.O.C. went to Belfast in July, 1913, he found his command between fifty and sixty thousand strong, with recruits joining every day. In September a number of parades were held in different localities, at which the General was accompanied by Sir Edward Carson, Mr. F. E. Smith, Captain James Craig, and other Members of Parliament. The local battalions were in many cases commanded by retired or half-pay officers of the regular army. At all these inspections Carson addressed the men, many of whom were now seeing their Commander-in-Chief for the first time, and pointed out that the U.V.F., being now under a single command, was no longer a mere collection of unrelated units, but an army. At an inspection at Antrim on the 21st of September, he made a disclosure which startled the country not a little next day when it appeared in the headlines of English newspapers. "I tell the Government," he said, "that we have pledges and promises from some of the greatest generals in the army, who have given their word that, when the time comes, if it is necessary, they will come over and help us to keep the old flag flying." These

promises were entirely spontaneous and unsolicited. More than one of those who made them did fine service to the Empire in the impending time of trial which none of them foresaw in 1913.

Of the men inspected on that day, numbering about 5,000, it was said by the Special Correspondent of *The Yorkshire Post*, who was present—

" As far as I could detect in a very careful observation, there were not half a dozen of them unqualified by physique or age to play a manly part. They reminded me more than anything else—except that but few of them were beyond the best fighting age—of the finest class of our National Reserve. There was certainly nothing of the mock soldier about them. Led by keen, smart-looking officers, they marched past in quarter column with fine, swinging steps, as if they had been in training for years. Officers who have had the teaching of them tell me that the rapidity with which they have become efficient is greater than has ever come within their experience in training recruits for either the Territorials or the Regular Service." [1]

The 24th of September, it will be remembered, was the day when the formation of the Provisional Government and the Indemnity Fund (with the subscription of a quarter of a million sterling in two hours) was made public; on Saturday the 27th, the country parades of Volunteers of the preceding weeks reached a climax in a grand review in Belfast itself, when some 15,000 men were drawn up on the same ground where the Balmoral meeting had been held eighteen months before. They were reviewed by Sir George Richardson, G.O.C., and it was on this occasion that Mr. F. E. Smith became famous as " galloper " to the General. The Commanders of the four regiments on parade—one from each parliamentary division of the city—comprising fourteen battalions, were: Colonel Wallace, Major F. H. Crawford, Major McCalmont, M.P., and Captain the Hon. A. C. Chichester. More than 30,000 sympathetic spectators watched the arrival and the review of the troops.

[1] *The Yorkshire Post*, September 22nd, 1913.

Among these spectators were a large number of special military correspondents of English newspapers, whose impressions of this memorable event were studied in every part of the United Kingdom on the following Monday morning. That which appeared in a great Lancashire journal may be quoted as a fair and dispassionate account of the scene:

"It is quite certain that the review of Volunteers at Balmoral to-day will go down into history as one of the most extraordinary events in the annals of these islands. Not since the marshalling of Cromwell's Puritan army have we had anything approaching a parallel; but, whereas the Puritans took up arms against a king of whom they disapproved, the men of Ulster strongly protest their loyalty to the British Throne. The great crowd which lined the enclosure was eager, earnest, and sympathetic. It was not a boisterous crowd. On the contrary, beyond the demonstration following the call for cheers for the Union there was comparatively little cheering. The crowd seemed burdened with a heavy sense of the importance of the occasion. The conduct of the gathering was serious to the point of positive solemnity.

"The Volunteers from their own ranks policed the grounds, not a solitary member of the Royal Irish Constabulary being seen in the enclosure. The sun shone brilliantly as Colonel Wallace led the men of the North division into the enclosure. Amidst subdued cheers he marched them across the field in fours, forming up in quarter column by the right, facing left. For an hour and a quarter the procession filed through the gates, the men taking up their positions with perfect movement and not the faintest suggestion of confusion. As the men from the West took up their position the crowd broke into a great cheer. They mustered only two battalions, but they had come from Mr. Devlin's constituency!

"As a body the men were magnificent. The hardy sons of toil from shipyards and factories marched shoulder to shoulder with clergy and doctors, professional men and clerks. From the saluting base General Richardson took command, and almost immediately Sir Edward Carson took up his position on the platform, with Lord Londonderry and Captain Craig in attendance. Then followed

a scene that will live long in the memories of that vast concourse of people. With the men standing to 'Attention,' the bands struck up the 'British Grenadiers,' and the whole division advanced in review order, in perfect lines and unison.

"The supreme moment had arrived. The men took off their hats, and the G.O.C. shouted, 'I call upon the men to give three cheers for the Union, taking their time from me. Hip, hip——'

"Well, people who were not there must imagine the rest. Out of the deafening cheers came the strains of 'Rule, Britannia!' from the bands; the monster Union Jack was unfurled in the centre of the ground, and the mighty gathering stood bare-headed to 'God save the King.' It was solemn, impressive, thrilling." [1]

The following day, Sunday, was "Ulster Day," the first anniversary of the signing of the Covenant, and it was celebrated in Belfast and many other places in Ulster by holding special services in all places of worship, which had the effect of sustaining that spirit of high seriousness which struck all observers as remarkable in the behaviour of the people.

This week, in which occurred the proclamation of the Provisional Government, the great review of the Belfast Volunteers, and the second celebration of Ulster Day, was a notable landmark in the movement. The Press in England and Scotland gave the widest publicity to every picturesque and impressive detail, and there can be little doubt that the idea of attempting to arrive at some agreed settlement, started by Lord Loreburn's letter to *The Times*, was greatly stimulated by these fresh and convincing proofs of the grim determination of the Ulster people.

At all events, the autumn produced more than the usual plethora of political meetings addressed by "front bench" politicians on both sides, each answering each like an antiphonal choir; scraps of olive-branch were timidly held out, only to be snatched back next day in panic lest someone had blundered in saying too much; while day by day a clamorous Liberal Press, to whom Ulster's loyalty

[1] *The Liverpool Daily Courier*, September 29th, 1913.

to King and Empire was an unforgivable offence, alternated between execration of Ulster wickedness and affected ridicule of Ulster bluff. But it was evident that genuine misgiving was beginning to be felt in responsible Liberal quarters. A Correspondent of *The Manchester Guardian* on the 25th of November made a proposal for special treatment of Ulster; on the 1st of December Mr. Massingham, in *The Daily News*, urged that an effort should be made to conciliate the northern Protestants; and on the 6th Mr. Asquith displayed a more conciliatory spirit than usual in a speech at Manchester. A most active campaign of propaganda in England and Scotland was also carried on during the autumn by Ulster speakers, among whom women bore their full share. The Ulster Women's Unionist Association employed 93 voluntary workers, who visited over 90 constituencies in Great Britain, addressing 230 important meetings. It was reckoned that not less than 100,000 electors heard the Ulster case from the lips of earnest Ulster women.

On the 5th of December two Royal Proclamations were issued by the Government, prohibiting the importation of arms and ammunition into Ireland. But during the Christmas holidays the impression gained ground that the Government contemplated making concessions to Ulster, and communications in private between the Prime Minister and Sir Edward Carson did in fact take place at this time. The truth, however, was that the Government were not their own masters, and, as Mr. Bonar Law bluntly declared at Bristol on the 15th of January, 1914, they were compelled by the Nationalists, on whom they depended for existence, to refuse any genuine concession. In the same speech Mr. Bonar Law replied to the allegation that Ulster was crying out before she was hurt, by saying that the American colonies had done the same thing—they had revolted on a question of principle while suffering was still distant, and for a cause that in itself was trivial in comparison with that of Ulster.[1]

Most of the leaders on both sides were speaking on various platforms in January. On the 17th Carson, at

[1] *Annual Register*, 1914, p. 6.

an inspection of the East Belfast U.V.F., said he had lately visited Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and that the dying statesman, clear-sighted and valiant as ever, had said to him at parting, "I would fight it out." In the same spirit Mr. Austen Chamberlain, in a speech at Skipton a fortnight later, ridiculed any concession that fell short of the exclusion of Ulster from the Irish Parliament, and asserted that what the policy of the Government amounted to was that England was to conquer a province and hold it down at the expense of her friends for the benefit of her enemies.[1]

Public attention was, however, not allowed to concentrate wholly on Ireland. The Radicals, instigated by Sir John Brunner, President of the National Liberal Federation, were doing their best to prevent the strengthening of the Navy, the time being opportune for parsimony in Mr. Lloyd George's opinion because our relations with Germany were "far more friendly than for years past."[2] The militant women suffragists were carrying on a lively campaign of arson and assault all over the country. Labour unrest was in a condition of ferment. Land agitation was exciting the "single-taxers" and other fanatics; and the Tariff question had not ceased to be a cause of division in the Unionist Party. But, while these matters were sharing with the Irish problem the attention of the Press and the public, "conversations" were being held behind the scenes with a view to averting what everyone now agreed would be a dangerous crisis if Ulster proved implacable.

When Parliament met on the 10th of February, 1914, Mr. Asquith referred to these conversations; but while he congratulated everyone concerned on the fact that the Press had been successfully kept in the dark for months regarding them, he had to admit that they had produced no result. But there were, he said, "schemes and suggestions of settlement in the air," among them the exclusion of Ulster from the Bill, a proposal on which he would not at that moment "pronounce, or attempt to pronounce, any final judgment", and he then announced that, as soon as the financial business of the year was disposed of,

[1] *Annual Register*, 1914, p. 12. [2] Ibid., p. 1.

he would bring forward proposals for the purpose of arriving at an agreement "which will consult not only the interests but the susceptibilities of all concerned."

This appeared to be a notable change of attitude on the part of the Government; but it was received with not a little suspicion by the Unionist leaders. Whether or not the change was due, as Mr. William Moore bluntly asserted, to the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, which had now reached its full strength of 100,000 men, the question of interest was whether the promised proposals would render that force unnecessary. Mr. Austen Chamberlain asked why the Government's proposals should be kept bottled up until a date suspiciously near All Fools' Day; and Sir Edward Carson, in one of the most impressive speeches he ever made in Parliament, which wrung from Mr. Lloyd George the acknowledgment that it had "entranced the House," joined Chamberlain in demanding that the country should not be kept in anxious suspense. The only proper way of making the proposals known was, he said, by embodying them at once in a Bill to amend the Home Rule Bill. He confirmed Chamberlain's statement that nothing short of the exclusion of Ulster would be of the slightest use. The Covenanters were not men who would have acted as they had done for the sake of minor details that could be adjusted by "paper safeguards," they were "fighting for a great principle and a great ideal," and if their determination to resist was not morally justified he "did not see how resistance could ever be justified in history at all." But if the exclusion of Ulster was to be offered, he would immediately go to Belfast and lay the proposal before his followers. He did not intend "that Ulster should be a pawn in any political game," and would not allow himself to be manœuvred into a position where it could afterwards be said that Ulster had resorted to arms to secure something that had been rejected when offered by legislation. The sympathy of Ulstermen with Loyalists in other parts of Ireland was as deep and sincere as ever, but no one had ever supposed that Ulster could by force of arms do more than preserve her own territory from subjection to Dublin. As for the

Nationalists, they would never succeed in coercing Ulster, but " by showing that good government can come under Home Rule they might try and win her over to the case of the rest of Ireland." That was a plan that had never yet been tried.

The significance of the announcement which Mr. Asquith had now made lay in the fact that it was an acknowledgment by the Government for the first time that there was an " Ulster Question " to be dealt with—that Ulster was not, as had hitherto been the Liberal theory, like any other minority who must submit to the will of the majority opposed to it, but a distinct community, conditioned by special circumstances entitling it to special treatment. The Prime Minister had thus, as Mr. Bonar Law insisted, " destroyed utterly the whole foundation on which for the last two years the treatment extended to Ulster in this Bill has been justified." From that day it became impossible ever again to contend that Ulster was merely a recalcitrant minority in a larger unity, without rights of her own.

The speeches of the Unionist leaders in the House of Commons showed clearly enough how little faith they had that the Government intended to do anything that could lead to an agreed settlement. The interval that passed before the nature of the Government's proposals was made known increased rather than diminished this distrust. The air was full of suggestions, the most notable of which was put forward by the veteran constitutional lawyer, Mr. Frederic Harrison, who proposed that Ulster should be governed by a separate committee elected by its own constituencies, with full legislative, administrative, and financial powers, subject only to the Crown and the Imperial Parliament.[1] Unionists did not believe that the Liberal Cabinet would be allowed by their Nationalist masters to offer anything so liberal to Ulster; nor did that Province desire autonomy for itself. They believed that the chief desire of the Government was not to appease Ulster, but to put her in a tactically indefensible position. This fear had been expressed by Lord Lansdowne as long

[1] *The Annual Register*, 1914, p. 33.

before as the previous October, when he wrote privately to Carson in reference to Lord Loreburn's suggested Conference that he suspected the intention of the Government to be " to offer us terms which they know we cannot accept, and then throw on us the odium of having obstructed a settlement." Mr. Walter Long had the same apprehension in March 1914 as to the purpose of Mr. Asquith's unknown proposals. Both these leaders herein showed insight and prescience, for not only Mr. Asquith's Government, but also that which succeeded it, had resort on many subsequent occasions to the manœuvre suspected by Lord Lansdowne.

On the other hand, there were encouraging signs in the country. To the intense satisfaction of Unionists, Mr. C. F. G. Masterman, who had just been promoted to the Cabinet, lost his seat in East London when he sought re-election in February, and a day or two later the Government suffered another defeat in Scotland. On the 27th of February Lord Milner, a fearless supporter of the Ulster cause, wrote to Carson that a British Covenant had been drawn up in support of the Ulster Covenanters, and that the first signatures, in addition to his own, were those of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Admiral of the Fleet Sir E. Seymour, the Duke of Portland, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Lord Desborough, Lord Lovat, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, Sir W. Ramsay, F.R.S., the Dean of Canterbury, Professors Dicey and Goudy, Sir George Hayter Chubb, and Mr. Salvidge, the influential alderman of Liverpool. On the 6th of March Mr. Walter Long, writing from the office of the Union Defence League, of which he was President, was able to inform Carson that there was " a rush to sign the Covenant—we are really almost overpowered." This was supplemented by a women's Covenant, which, like the men's, " had been numerously and influentially signed, about 3 or 4 per cent. of the signatories, it was said, being Liberals." [1] Long believed from this and other evidence that had reached him that " public opinion was now really aroused in the country," and that the steadfast policy of Ulster had the undoubted support of the electorate.

[1] *Annual Register*, 1914, pp. 51–2.

Only those who were in the confidence of Mr. Asquith and his colleagues at the beginning of 1914 can know whether the "proposals" they then made were ever seriously put forward as an effort towards appeasement. If they were sincerely meant for such, it implied a degree of ignorance of the chief factor in the problem with which it is difficult to credit able Ministers who had been face to face with that problem for years. They must have supposed that their leading opponents were capable of saying emphatically one thing and meaning quite another. For the Unionist leaders had stated over and over again in the most unmistakable terms, both in the recent debate on the Address, and on innumerable former occasions, that nothing except the "exclusion of Ulster" could furnish a basis for negotiation towards settlement.

And yet, when the Prime Minister at last put his cards on the table on the 9th of March, in moving the second reading of the Home Rule Bill—which now entered on its third and last lap under the Parliament Act—it was found that his much-trumpeted proposals were derisory to the last degree. The scheme was that which came to be known as county option with a time limit. Any county in Ulster, including the cities of Belfast and Derry, was to be given the right to vote itself out of the Home Rule jurisdiction, on a requisition signed by a specified proportion of its parliamentary electorate, for a period of six years.

Mr. Bonar Law said at once, on behalf of the Unionist Party, that apart from all other objections to the Government scheme, and they were many, the time limit for exclusion made the whole proposal a mockery. All that it meant was that when the preparations in Ulster for resistance to Home Rule had been got rid of—for it would be practically impossible to keep them in full swing for six years—Ulster should then be compelled to submit to the very thing to which she refused to submit now. Carson described the proposal as a "sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years." He noted with satisfaction indeed the admission of the principle of exclusion, but expressed his conviction that the time limit had been introduced merely in order to make it impossible for Ulster

to accept. Ulster wanted the question settled once for all, so that she might turn her attention from politics to her ordinary business. The time limit would keep the fever of political agitation at a high temperature for six years, and at the end of that period forcible resistance would be as necessary as ever, while in the interval all administration would be paralysed by the unworkable nature of the system to be introduced for six years. Although there were other gross blots on the scheme outlined by the Prime Minister, yet, if the time limit were dropped, Carson said he would submit it to a convention in Belfast; but he utterly declined to do so if the time limit was to be retained.

The debate was adjourned indefinitely, and before it could be resumed the whole situation was rendered still more grave by the events to be narrated in the next chapter, and by a menacing speech delivered by Mr. Churchill at Bradford on the 14th of March. He hinted that, if Ulster persisted in refusing the offer made by the Prime Minister, which was the Government's last word, the forces of the Crown would have to be employed against her; there were, he said, "worse things than bloodshed even on an extended scale"; and he ended by saying, "Let us go forward together and put these grave matters to the proof."[1] Two days later Mr. Asquith, in answer to questions in the House of Commons, announced that no particulars of the Government scheme would be given unless the principle of the proposals were accepted as a basis of agreement.

The leader of the Unionist Party replied by moving a vote of censure on the Government on the 19th of March. Mr. Churchill's Bradford speech, and one no less defiant by Mr. Devlin the day following it, had charged with inflammable material the atmosphere in which the debate was conducted. Sir Edward Carson began his speech by saying that, after these recent events, "I feel that I ought not to be here, but in Belfast." There were some sharp passages between him and Churchill, whom he accused of being anxious to provoke the Ulster people to make an attack

[1] *The Times*, March 16th, 1914.

on the soldiers. A highly provocative speech by Mr. Devlin followed, at the end of which Carson rose and left the House, saying audibly, " I am off to Belfast." He was accompanied out of the Chamber by eight Ulster members, and was followed by ringing and sustained cheers of encouragement and approval from the crowded Unionist benches. It was a scene which those who witnessed it are not likely to forget.

The idea of accommodation between the combatant parties was at an end.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CURRAGH INCIDENT

When Mr. Bonar Law moved the vote of censure on the Government on the 19th of March he had no idea that the Cabinet had secretly taken in hand an enterprise which, had it been known, would have furnished infinitely stronger grounds for their impeachment than anything relating to their " proposals " for amending the Home Rule Bill. It was an enterprise that, when it did become known, very nearly brought about their fall from power.

The whole truth about the famous " Curragh Incident " has never been ascertained, and the answers given by the Ministers chiefly concerned, under cross-examination in the House of Commons, were so evasive and in several instances so contradictory as to make it certain that they were exceedingly anxious that the truth should be concealed. But when the available evidence is pieced together it leads almost irresistibly to the conclusion that in March 1914 the Cabinet, or at any rate some of the most prominent members of it, decided to make an imposing demonstration of military force against Ulster, and that they expected, if they did not hope, that this operation would goad the Ulstermen into a clash with the forces of the Crown, which, by putting them morally in the wrong, would deprive them of the popular sympathy they enjoyed in so large and increasing a measure.

When Mr. Churchill spoke at Bradford on the 14th of March of " putting these grave matters to the proof " he was already deeply involved in what came to be known as " the plot against Ulster," to which his words were doubtless an allusion. That plot may perhaps have originated at Mr. Lloyd George's breakfast-table on the 11th, when he entertained Mr. Redmond, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Devlin, Mr. O'Connor, and the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr.

Birrell; for on the same day it was decided to send a squadron of battleships with attendant cruisers and destroyers from the coast of Spain to Lamlash, in the Isle of Arran, opposite Belfast Lough; and a sub-committee of the Cabinet, consisting of Lord Crewe, Mr. Churchill, Colonel Seely, Mr. Birrell, and Sir John Simon, was appointed to deal with affairs connected with Ulster. This sub-committee held its first meeting the following day, and the next was the date of Mr. Churchill's threatening speech at Bradford, with its reference to the prospect of bloodshed and of putting grave matters to the proof. Bearing in mind this sequence of events, it is not easy to credit the contention of the Government, after the plot had been discovered, that the despatch of the fleet to the neighbourhood of the Ulster coast had no connection with the other naval and military operations which immediately followed.

For on the 14th, while Churchill was travelling in the train to Bradford, Seely, the Secretary of State for War, was drafting a letter to Sir Arthur Paget, the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, informing him of reports (it was never discovered where the reports, which were without the smallest foundation, came from) that attempts might be made "in various parts of Ireland by evil-disposed persons" to raid Government stores of arms and ammunition, and instructing the General to "take special precautions" to safeguard the military depots. It was added that "information shows that Armagh, Omagh, Carrickfergus, and Enniskillen are insufficiently guarded."[1] It is permissible to wonder, if there was danger from evil-disposed persons "in various parts of Ireland," from whom came the information that the places particularly needing reinforcements were a ring of strategically important towns round the outskirts of the loyalist counties of Ulster.

Whatever the source of the alleged "information"—whether it originated at Mr. Lloyd George's breakfast-table or elsewhere—Seely evidently thought it alarmingly urgent, for within forty-eight hours he telegraphed to Paget asking for a reply before 8 a.m. next morning as to

[1] See White Paper (Cd. 7329), No. II.

what steps he had taken, and ordering the General to come at once to London, bringing with him detailed plans. On the 16th Sir A. Paget telegraphed that he "had taken all available steps"; but, on second thoughts, he wrote on the 17th saying that there were sufficient troops at Enniskillen to guard the depot, that he was making a small increase to the detachment at Carrickfergus, and that, instead of strengthening the garrisons of Omagh and Armagh, the stores there were being removed—an operation that would take eight days. He explained his reason for this departure from instructions to be that such a movement of troops as had been ordered by the War Office would, "in the present state of the country, create intense excitement in Ulster and possibly precipitate a crisis." [1]

As soon as this communication reached the War Office orders were sent that the arms and ammunition at Omagh and Armagh, for the safety of which from evil-disposed persons Seely had been so apprehensive, were not to be removed, although they had already been packed for transport. This order was sent on the 18th of March, and on the same day Sir Arthur Paget arrived in London from Ireland and had a consultation with the Ulster sub-committee of the Cabinet, and with Sir John French and other members of the Army Council at the War Office.

News of this meeting reached the ears of Sir Edward Carson, who was also aware that a false report was being spread of attempts by Unionists to influence the Army, and in his speech on the vote of censure on the 19th he said: "I have never suggested that the Army should not be sent to Ulster. I have never suggested that it should not do its duty when sent there. I hope and expect it will." At the same time reports were circulating in Dublin—did they come from Downing Street?—that the Government were preparing to take strong measures against the Ulster Unionist Council, and to arrest the leaders. In allusion to these reports the Dublin Correspondent of *The Times* telegraphed on the 18th of March: "Any man or Government that increases the danger by blundering or hasty action will accept a terrible responsibility."

[1] See White Paper (Cd. 7329), No. VI.

What passed at the interviews which Sir Arthur Paget had with Ministers on the 18th and 19th has never been disclosed. But it is clear, from the events which followed, either that an entirely new plan on a much larger scale was now inaugurated, or that a development now took place which Churchill and Seely, and perhaps other Ministers also, had contemplated from the beginning and had concealed behind the pretended insignificance of precautions to guard depots. It is noteworthy, at all events, that the measures contemplated happened to be the stationing of troops in considerable strength in important strategical positions round Ulster, simultaneously with the despatch of a powerful fleet to within a few hours of Belfast.

The orders issued by the War Office, at any rate, indicated something on a far bigger scale than the original pretext could justify. Paget's fear of precipitating a crisis was brushed aside, and General Friend, who was acting for him in Dublin during his absence, was instructed by telegram to send to the four Ulster towns more than double the number of men that Paget had deemed would be sufficient to protect the Government stores. But still more significant was another order given to Friend on the 18th. The Dorset Regiment, quartered in the Victoria Barracks in Belfast, were to be moved four miles out to Holywood, taking with them their stores and ammunition, amounting to some thirty tons ; and such was the anxiety of the Government to get the troops out of the city that they were told to leave their rifles behind, if necessary, after rendering them useless by removing the bolts.[1] The Government had vetoed Paget's plan of removing the stores from Omagh and Armagh, because their real object was to increase the garrisons at those places ; but, as they had no scruple about moving the much larger supply from the Victoria Barracks through the most intensely Orange quarter of Belfast, it could hardly be wondered at if such an order, under the circumstances, was held to give colour to the idea that Ministers wished to provoke violent opposition to the troops. Not less inconsistent with the original pretext was the despatch of a battalion to Newry and

[1] See White Paper (Cd. 7329), No. VII.

Dundalk. At the latter place there was already a brigade of artillery, with eighteen guns, which would prove a tough nut for "evil-disposed persons" to crack; and although both towns would be important points to hold with an army making war on Ulster, they were both in Nationalist territory where there could be no fear of raids by Unionists. Yet the urgency was considered so great at the War Office to occupy these places in strength not later than the 20th that two cruisers were ordered to Kingstown to take the troops to Dundalk by sea, if there should be difficulty about land transport.

Whatever may have been the actual design of Mr. Churchill and Colonel Seely, who appear to have practically taken the whole management of the affair into their own hands, the dispositions must have suggested to anyone with elementary knowledge of military matters that nothing less than an overpowering attack on Belfast was in contemplation. The transfer of the troops from Victoria Barracks, where they would have been useful to support the civil power in case of rioting, to Holywood, where they would be less serviceable for that purpose but where they would be in rapid communication by water with the garrison of Carrickfergus on the opposite shore of the Lough; the ordering of H.M.S. *Pathfinder* and *Attentive* to Belfast Lough, where they were to arrive "at daybreak on Saturday the 21st instant" with instructions to support the soldiers if necessary "by guns and searchlights from the ships[1]"; the secret and rapid garrisoning of strategic points on all the railways leading to Belfast,—all this pointed, not to the safeguarding of stores of army boots and rifles, but to operations of an offensive campaign.

It was in this light that the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland himself interpreted his instructions, and, seeing that he had taken the responsibility of not fully obeying the much more modest orders he had received in Ireland on the 14th, it is easy to understand that he thought the steps now to be taken would lead to serious consequences. He also foresaw that he might have trouble with some of the officers under his command, for before leaving London he persuaded

[1] White Paper (Cd. 7329), Part II, No. II.

the Secretary of State and Sir John French to give the following permission: "Officers actually domiciled in Ulster would be exempted from taking part in any operation that might take place. They would be permitted to 'disappear' [that being the exact phrase used by the War Office], and when all was over would be allowed to resume their places without their career or position being affected." [1]

Having obtained this concession, Sir Arthur Paget returned the same night to Dublin, where he arrived on the 20th and had a conference with his general officers.

He told them of the instructions he had received, which the Government called "precautionary" and believed "would be carried out without resistance." The Commander-in-Chief did not share the Government's optimism. He thought "that the moves would create intense excitement," that by next day "the country would be ablaze," and that the result might be "active operations against organised bodies of the Ulster Volunteer Force under their responsible leaders." With regard to the permission for officers domiciled in Ulster to "disappear," he informed his generals that any other officers who were not prepared to carry out their duty would be dismissed the Service.

There was, apparently, some misunderstanding as to whether officers without an Ulster domicile who objected to fight against Ulster were to say so at once and accept dismissal, or were to wait until they received some specific order which they felt unable to obey. Many of the officers understood the General to mean the former of these two alternatives, and the Colonel of one line regiment gave his officers half an hour to make up their minds on a question affecting their whole future career; every one of them objected to going against Ulster, and "nine or ten refused under any condition" to do so.[2] Another regimental commanding officer told his subordinates that "steps have been taken in Ulster so that any aggression must come from the Ulsterites, and they will have to shed the first blood," on which his comment was: "The idea of provoking Ulster is hellish." [3]

[1] White Paper (Cd. 7329), Part III.

[2] See *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. lx, p. 73.

[3] Ibid., p. 426.

In consequence of what he learnt at the conference with his generals on the morning of the 20th Sir Arthur Paget telegraphed to the War Office: "Officer Commanding 5th Lancers states that all officers except two, and one doubtful, are resigning their commissions to-day. I much fear same conditions in the 16th Lancers. Fear men will refuse to move[1]"; and later in the day he reported that the "Brigadier and 57 officers, 3rd Cavalry Brigade, prefer to accept dismissal if ordered north."[2] Next day he had to add that the Colonel and all the officers of the 4th Hussars had taken up the same attitude.[3]

This was very disconcerting news for the War Office, where it had been taken for granted that very few, if any, officers, except perhaps a few natives of Ulster, would elect to wreck their careers, if suddenly confronted with so terrible a choice, rather than take part in operations against the Ulster Loyalists. Instructions were immediately wired to Paget in Dublin to "suspend any senior officers who have tendered their resignations"; to refuse to accept the resignation of junior officers; and to send General Gough, the Brigadier in command of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, and the commanding officers of the two Lancer regiments and the 4th Hussars, to report themselves promptly at the War Office after relieving them of their commands.

Had the War Office made up its mind what to do with General Gough and the other cavalry officers when they arrived in London? The inference to be drawn from the correspondence published by the Government makes it appear probable that the first intention was to punish these officers severely *pour encourager les autres*. An officer to replace Gough had actually been appointed and sent to Ireland, though Mr. Asquith denied in the House of Commons that the offending generals had been dismissed. But, if that was the intention, it was abandoned. The reason is not plain; but the probability is that it had been discovered that sympathy with Gough was widespread in the Army, and that his dismissal would bring about very numerous resignations. It was said that a large part of the

[1] Cd. 7329, No. XVII.
[2] Ibid., Nos. XVIII, XX.
[3] Ibid., Nos. XXII, XXIII.

Staff of the War Office itself would have laid down their commissions, and that Aldershot would have been denuded of officers.[1] Colonel Seely himself described it as a "situation of grave peril to the Army."[2]

Anyhow, no disciplinary action of any kind was taken. It was decided to treat the matter as one of "misunderstanding," and when Gough and his brother officers appeared at the War Office on Monday the 23rd they were told that it was all a mistake to suppose that the Government had ever intended warlike operations against Ulster (the orders to the fleet had been cancelled by wireless on the 21st), and that they might return at once to their commands, with the assurance that they would not be required to serve against Ulster Loyalists. General Gough, who before leaving Ireland had asked Sir A. Paget for a clear definition in writing of the duties that officers would be expected to perform if they went to Ulster,[3] thought that in view of the "misunderstanding" it would be wise to have Colonel Seely's assurance also in black and white. Seely had to hurry off to a Cabinet Meeting, and in his absence the Adjutant-General reduced to writing the verbal statement of the Secretary of State. A very confused story about the subsequent fortunes of this piece of paper made it the central mystery round which raged angry debates. This much, however, is not doubtful. Seely went from the Cabinet to Buckingham Palace; when he returned to Downing Street the paper was there, but the Cabinet had broken up. He looked at the paper, saw that it did not accurately reproduce the assurance he had verbally given to Gough, and with the help of Lord Morley he thereupon added two paragraphs (which Mr. Balfour designated "the peccant paragraphs") to make it conform to his promise. The addition so made was the only part of the document that gave the assurance that the officers would not be called upon "to crush political opposition to the policy or principles of the Home Rule Bill." With this paper in his pocket General Gough returned to his command at the Curragh.

[1] See *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. lx, p. 246.
[2] Ibid., p. 400.
[3] White Paper (Cd. 7329), No. XX.

There the matter might have ended had not some of the facts become known to Unionist members of the House of Commons, and to the Press. On Sunday, the 22nd, Mr. Asquith sent a communication to *The Times* (published on the 23rd) in which he minimised the whole matter, putting forward the original pretext of movements of troops solely to protect Government property—an account at variance with a statement two days later by Churchill in regard to the reason for naval movements—and on the 23rd Seely also made a statement in the House of Commons on the same lines as the Prime Minister's, which ended by saying that all the movements of troops were completed " and all orders issued have been punctually and implicitly obeyed." This was an hour or two after his interview with the generals who had been summoned from Ireland to be dismissed for refusal to obey orders.

But Mr. Bonar Law had his own information, which was much fuller than the Government imagined. A long and heated debate followed Colonel Seely's statement, and was continued on the two following days, gradually dragging to light the facts with a much greater profusion of detail than is necessary for this narrative. On the 24th Mr. L. S. Amery made a speech which infuriated the Radicals and Labour members, but the speaker, as was his intention, made them quite as angry with the Government as with himself. The cause of offence was that the Government was thought to have allowed itself to be coerced by the soldiers, while the latter had been allowed to make their obedience to orders contingent on a bargain struck with the Government. This aspect of the case was forcibly argued by Mr. J. Ward, the Labour member for Stoke, in a speech greatly admired by enthusiasts for " democratic " principles. Although Mr. Ward's invective was mainly directed against the Unionist Opposition, the latter listened to it with secret pleasure, perceiving that it was in reality more damaging to the Government than to themselves, since Ministers were forced into an attitude of defence against their own usually docile supporters. It may here be mentioned that at a much later date, when Mr. John Ward, in the light of experience gained by his own distinguished

service as an officer in the Great War, had come to the conviction that "the possibility of forcing Ulster within the ambit of a Dublin Parliament has now become unthinkable," he acknowledged that in 1914 the only way by which Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Act could have been enforced was through and by the power of the Army.[1]

So much shaken were the Government by these attacks that on the next day, the 25th of March, Colonel Seely, at the end of a long narrative of the transaction, announced his resignation from the Government. He had, he said, unintentionally misled his colleagues by adding without their knowledge to the paper given to General Gough; the Cabinet as a whole was quite innocent of the great offence given to democratic sentiment. This announcement having had the desired effect of relieving the Ministry as a whole from responsibility for the "peccant paragraphs," and averting Radical wrath from their heads, the Prime Minister later in the debate said he was not going to accept Seely's resignation. Yet Mr. Churchill exhibited a fine frenzy of indignation against Mr. Austen Chamberlain for describing it as a "put-up job."

Only a fairly fertile imagination could suggest a transaction to which the phrase would be more justly applicable. The idea that Seely, in adding the paragraphs, was tampering in any way with the considered policy of the Cabinet was absurd, although it served the purpose of averting a crisis in the House of Commons. He had been in constant and close communication with Churchill, who had himself been present at the War Office Conference with Gough, and who had seen the Prime Minister earlier in company with Sir John French. The whole business had been discussed at the Cabinet Meeting, and when Seely returned from his audience of the King he found the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, and Lord Morley still in the Cabinet room. Mr. Asquith said on the 25th in the House of Commons that no Minister except Seely had seen the added paragraphs, and almost at the same moment in the House of Lords Lord Morley was saying that he had helped Seely to draft them.

[1] *The Nineteenth Century and After*, January 1921, art. "The Army and Ireland," by Lieut.-Colonel John Ward, C.B., C.M.G., M.P.

Moreover, Lord Morley actually took a copy of them, which he read in the House of Lords, and he included the substance of them in his exposition of the Government policy in the Upper House.

Furthermore, General Gough was on his way to Ireland that night, and if it had been true that the Prime Minister, or any other Minister, disapproved of what Seely had done, there was no reason why Gough should not have found a telegram waiting for him at the Curragh in the morning cancelling Seely's paragraphs and withdrawing the assurance they contained. No step of that kind was taken, and the Government, while repudiating in the House of Commons the action for which Seely was allowed to take the sole responsibility, permitted Gough to retain in his despatch-box the document signed by the Army Council.

For it was not only the Secretary of State for War who was involved. The memorandum had been written by the Adjutant-General, and it bore the initials of Sir John French and Sir Spencer Ewart as well as Colonel Seely's. These members of the Army Council knew that the verbal assurance given by the Secretary of State to Gough had not been completely embodied in the written memorandum without the paragraph which had been repudiated after the debate in the Commons on the 24th, and they were not prepared to go back on their written word, or to be satisfied by the " put-up job " resignation of their civilian Chief. They both sent in their resignations ; and, as they refused even under pressure to withdraw them, the Secretary of State had no choice but to do the same on the 30th of March, this time beyond recall. Mr. Asquith announced on the same day that he had himself become Secretary of State for War, and would have to go to Scotland for re-election.

The facts as here related were only extracted by the most persistent and laborious cross-examination of the Government, who employed all the familiar arts of official evasion in order to conceal the truth from the country. Day after day Ministers were bombarded by batteries of questions in the House of Commons, in addition to the lengthy debates that occupied the House for several consecutive days. This pressure compelled the Prime Minister

to produce a White Paper, entitled "Correspondence relating to Recent Events in the Irish Command." [1] It was published on the 25th of March, the third day of the continuous debates, and, although Mr. Asquith said it contained "all the material documents," it was immediately apparent to members who had closely studied the admissions that had been dragged from the Ministers chiefly concerned, that it was very far from doing so. Much the most important documents had, in fact, been withheld. Suspicion as to the good faith of the Government was increased when it was found that the Lord Chancellor, Lord Haldane, had interpolated into the official Report of his speech in the House of Lords a significant word which transformed his definite pledge that Ulster would not be coerced, into a mere statement that no "immediate" coercion was contemplated.

In the face of such evasion and prevarication it was out of the question to let the matter drop. On the 22nd of April the Government was forced to publish a second White Paper,[2] which contained a large number of highly important documents omitted from the first. But it was evident that much was still being kept back, and, in particular, that what had passed between Sir Arthur Paget and his officers at a conference mentioned in the published correspondence was being carefully concealed. Mr. Bonar Law demanded a judicial inquiry, where evidence could be taken on oath. Mr. Asquith refused, saying that an insinuation against the honour of Ministers could only be properly investigated by the House of Commons itself, and that a day would be given for a vote of censure if the leader of the Opposition meant that he could not trust the word of Ministers of the Crown. Mr. Bonar Law sharply retorted that he "had already accused the Prime Minister of making a statement which was false." [3] But even this did not suffice to drive the Government to face the ordeal of having their own account of the affair at the Curragh sifted by the sworn evidence of others who knew the facts. They preferred to take cover under the dutiful cheers of

[1] Cd. 7318. [2] Cd. 7329.
[3] *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. lxi, p. 765.

their parliamentary majority when they repeated their explanations, which had already been proved to be untrue.

But the Ulster Unionist Council had, meantime, been making inquiries on their own account. There was nothing in the least improper, although the supporters of the Government tried to make out that there was, in the officers at the Curragh revealing what the Commander-in-Chief had said to them, so long as they did not communicate anything to the Press. They were not, and could not be, pledged to secrecy. It thus happened that it was possible for the Old Town Hall in Belfast to put together a more complete account of the whole affair than it suited the Government to reveal to Parliament. On the 17th of April the Standing Committee issued to the Press a statement giving the main additional facts which a sworn inquiry would have elicited. It bore the signatures of Lord Londonderry and Sir Edward Carson, and there can have been few foolhardy enough to suggest that these were men who would be likely to take such a step without first satisfying themselves as to the trustworthiness of the evidence, a point on which the judgment of one of them at all events was admittedly unrivalled.

From this statement it appeared that Sir Arthur Paget, so far from indicating that mere " precautionary measures " for the protection of Government stores were in contemplation, told his generals that preparations had been made for the employment of some 25,000 troops in Ulster, in conjunction with naval operations. The gravity of the plan was revealed by the General's use of the words " battles " and " the enemy," and his statement that he would himself be " in the firing line " at the first " battle." He said that, when some casualties had been suffered by the troops, he intended to approach " the enemy " with a flag of truce and demand their surrender, and if this should be refused he would order an assault on their position. The cavalry, whose pro-Ulster sentiments must have been well known to the Commander-in-Chief, were told that they would only be required to prevent the infantry " bumping into the enemy," or in other words to act as a cavalry screen ; that they would not be called upon to fire on " the

enemy"; and that as soon as the infantry became engaged, they would be withdrawn and sent to Cork, where "a disturbance would be arranged" to provide a pretext for the movement. A Military Governor of Belfast was to be appointed, and the general purpose of the operations was to blockade Ulster by land and sea, and to provoke the Ulstermen to shed the first blood.

The publication of this statement with the authority of the two Ulster leaders created a tremendous sensation. But it probably strengthened the resolution of the Government to refuse at all costs a judicial inquiry, which they knew would only supply sworn corroboration of the Ulster Unionist Council's story. In this they were assisted in an unexpected way. Just when the pressure was at its highest, relief came by the diversion of attention and interest caused by another startling event in Ulster, which will be described in the following chapters.

This Curragh Incident, which caused intense and prolonged excitement in March 1914, and nearly upset the Asquith Government, had more than momentary importance in connection with the Ulster Movement. It proved to demonstration the intense sympathy with the loyalist cause that pervaded the Army. That sympathy was not, as Radical politicians like Mr. John Ward believed, an aristocratic sentiment only to be found in the mess-rooms of smart cavalry regiments. It existed in all branches of the Service, and among the rank and file as well as the commissioned ranks. Sir Arthur Paget's telegram reporting to the War Office the feeling in the 5th and 16th Lancers, said, "Fear men will refuse to move."[1] The men had not the same facility as the officers in making their sentiments known at headquarters, but their sympathies were the same.

The Government had no excuse for being ignorant of this feeling in the Army. It had been a matter of notoriety for a long time. Its existence and its danger had been reported by Lord Wolseley to the Duke of Cambridge, back in the old days of Gladstonian Home Rule, in a letter that had been since published. In July 1913 *The Times* gave

[1] White Paper (Cd. 7329), No. XVII. See *ante*, p. 180.

the warning in a leading article that "the crisis, the approach of which Ministers affect to treat with unconcern, is already causing uneasiness and apprehension in the public Services, and especially in the Army. . . . It is notorious that some officers have already begun to speak of sending in their papers." Lord Roberts had uttered a significant warning in the House of Lords not long before the incident at the Curragh. Colonel Seely himself had been made aware of it in the previous December when he signed a War Office Memorandum on the subject[1]; and, indeed, no officer could fail to be aware of it who had ever been quartered in Ireland.

Nor was it surprising that this sympathy should manifest itself. No one is quicker to appreciate the difference between loyalty and disloyalty than the soldier. There were few regiments in the Army that had not learnt by experience that the King's uniform was constantly insulted in Nationalist Ireland, and as invariably welcomed and honoured in Ulster. In the vote of censure debate on the 19th of March Mr. Cave quoted an Irish newspaper, which had described the British Army as "the most immoral and degraded force in Europe," and warned Irishmen that, by joining it, all they would get was "a red coat, a dishonoured name, a besmirched character." On the other hand, the very troops who were sent North from the Curragh against the advice of Sir Arthur Paget, to provoke "the Ulsterites to shed the first blood," had, as the Commander-in-Chief reported, "everywhere a good reception."[2]

The welcoming cheers at Holywood and Carrickfergus and Armagh were probably a pleasant novelty to men fresh from the Curragh or Fermoy. Even in Belfast itself the contrast was brought home to troops quartered in Victoria Barracks, all of whom were well aware that on the death of a comrade his coffin would have to be borne by a roundabout route to the cemetery, to avoid the Nationalist quarter of the city where a military funeral would be exposed to insult.

Such experiences, as they harden into traditions, sink deep into the consciousness of an Army and breed senti-

[1] White Paper (Cd. 7329), No. I. [2] Ibid., No. XXVII.

ments that are not easily eradicated. Soldiers ought, of course, to have no politics; but when it appeared that they might be called upon to open fire on those whom they had always counted "on our side," in order to subject them forcibly to men who hated the sight of a British flag and were always ready to spit upon it, human nature asserted itself. And the incident taught the Government something as to the difficulty they would have in enforcing the Home Rule Bill in Ulster.

CHAPTER XVII

ARMING THE U.V.F.

If the "evil-disposed persons" who so excited the fancy of Colonel Seely were supposed to be Ulster Loyalists, the whole story was an absurdity that did no credit to the Government's Intelligence in Ireland; and if there ever was any "information," such as the War Office alleged, it must have come from a source totally ignorant of Ulster psychology. Raids on Government stores were never part of the Ulster programme. The excitement of the Curragh Incident passed off without causing any sort of disturbance, and, as we have seen, the troops who were sent North received everywhere in Ulster a loyal welcome. This was a fine tribute to the discipline and restraint of the people, and was a further proof of their confidence in their leaders. Those leaders, it happened, were at that very moment taking measures to place arms in the hands of the U.V.F. without robbing Government depots or any one else. That method was left to their opponents in Ireland at a later date, who adopted it on an extensive scale accompanied by systematic terrorism. The Ulster plan was quite different. All the arms they obtained were paid for, and their only crime was that they successfully hoodwinked Mr. Asquith's colleagues and agents.

Every movement has its Fabius, and also its Hotspur. Both are needed—the men of prudence and caution, anxious to avoid extreme courses, slow to commit themselves too far or to burn their boats with the river behind them; and the impetuous spirits, who chafe at half-measures, cannot endure temporising, and are impatient for the order to advance against any odds. Major F. H. Crawford had more of the temperament of a Hotspur than of a Fabius, but he nevertheless possessed qualities of patience, re-

ticence, discretion, and coolness which enabled him to render invaluable service to the Ulster cause in an enterprise that would certainly have miscarried in the hands of a man endowed only with impetuosity and reckless courage. If the story of his adventures in procuring arms for the U.V.F. be ever told in minute detail, it will present all the features of an exciting novel by Mr. John Buchan.

Fred Crawford, the man who followed a family tradition when he signed the Covenant with his own blood,[1] began life as a premium apprentice in Harland and Wolf's great shipbuilding yard, after which he served for a year as an engineer in the White Star Line, before settling down to his father's manufacturing business in Belfast. Like so many ardent Loyalists in Ulster, he came of Liberal stock. He was for years honorary Secretary of the Reform Club in Belfast. The more staid members of this highly respectable establishment were not a little startled and perplexed when it was brought to their attention in 1907 that advertisements in the name of one "Hugh Matthews," giving the Belfast Reform Club as his address, had appeared in a number of foreign newspapers—French, Belgian, Italian, German, and Austrian—inquiring for "10,000 rifles and one million rounds of small-arm ammunition." The membership of the Club included no Hugh Matthews; but inquiry showed that the name covered the identity of the Hon. Secretary; and Crawford, who sought no concealment in the matter, justified the advertisements by pointing out that the Liberal Government which had lately come into power had begun its rule in Ireland by repealing the Act prohibiting the importation of arms, and that there was therefore nothing illegal in what he was doing. But he resigned his secretaryship, which he felt might hamper future transactions of the same kind. The advertisement was no doubt half bravado and half practical joke; he wanted to see whether it would attract notice, and if anything would come of it. But it had also an element of serious purpose.

Crawford regarded the advent to power of the Liberal Party as ominous, as indeed all Ulster did, for the Liberal Party was a Home Rule Party; and he had from his youth

[1] *Ante*, p. 123.

been convinced that the day would come when Ulster would have to carry out Lord Randolph Churchill's injunction. That being so, he was not the man to tarry till solemn assemblies of merchants, lawyers, and divines should propound a policy; if there was to be fighting, Crawford was going to be ready for it, and thought that preparation for such a contingency could not begin too soon. And the advertisements were not barren of practical result. There was an astonishing number of replies; Crawford purchased a few rifles, and obtained samples of others; and, what was more important, he gained knowledge of the Continental trade in second-hand firearms, which had its centre in the free port of Hamburg, and of the men engaged in that trade. This knowledge he turned to account in 1912 and the two following years.

He had been for nearly twenty years an officer of Artillery Militia, and when the U.V.F. was organised in 1912 he became its Director of Ordnance on the headquarters staff. He was also a member of the Standing Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council, where he persistently advocated preparation for armed resistance long before most of his colleagues thought such a policy necessary. But early in 1912 he obtained leave to get samples of procurable firearms, and his promptitude in acting on it, and in presenting before certain members of the Committee a collection of gleaming rifles with bayonets fixed, took away the breath of the more cautious of his colleagues.

From this time forward Crawford was frequently engaged in this business. He got into communication with the dealers in arms whose acquaintance he had made six years before. He went himself to Hamburg, and, after learning something of the chicanery prevalent in the trade, which it took all his resourcefulness to overcome, he fell in with an honest Jew by whose help he succeeded in sending a thousand rifles safely to Belfast. Other consignments followed from time to time in larger or smaller quantities, in the transport of which all the devices of old-time smuggling were put to the test. Crawford bought a schooner, which for a year or more proved very useful, and, while employing her in bringing arms to Ulster, he

made acquaintance with a skipper of one of the Antrim Iron Ore Company's coasting steamers, whose name was Agnew, a fine seaman of the best type produced by the British Mercantile Marine, who afterwards proved an invaluable ally, to whose loyalty and ability Crawford and Ulster owed a deep debt of gratitude, as they also did to Mr. Robert Browne, Managing Director of the Antrim Iron Ore Company, for placing at their disposal both vessels and seamen from time to time.

Now and then the goods fell a victim to Custom House vigilance; for although there was at this time nothing illegal in importing firearms, it was not considered prudent to carry on the trade openly, which would certainly have led to prohibition being introduced and enforced; and, consequently, infringements of shipping regulations had to be risked, which gave the authorities the right to interfere if they discovered rifles where zinc plates or musical instruments ought to have been.

On one occasion a case of arms was shipped on a small steamer from Glasgow to Portrush, but was not entered in the manifest, so that the skipper (being a worthy man) knew nothing—officially—of this box which lay on deck instead of descending into the hold. But two Customs officials, who noticed it with unsatisfied curiosity, decided, just as the boat cast off, to make the trip to Portrush. Happily it was a dirty night, and they, being bad sailors, were constrained to take refuge from the elements in the Captain's cabin. But when Portrush was reached search and research proved unavailing to find the mysterious box; the skipper could find no mention of it in the manifest and thought the Customs House gentlemen must have been dreaming; they, on the other hand, threatened to seize the ship if the box did not materialise, and were told to do so at their peril. But exactly off Ballycastle, which had been passed while the officials were poorly, there was a float in the sea attached to a line, which in due course led to the recovery of a case of valuable property that was none the worse for a few hours' rest on the bottom of the Moyle.

Qualities of a different sort were called into play in

negotiating the purchase of machine-guns from Messrs. Vickers & Co., at Woolwich. Here a strong American accent, combined with the providential circumstance that Mexico happened to be in the grip of revolutionary civil war, overcame all difficulties, and Mr. John Washington Graham, U.S.A. (otherwise Fred H. Crawford of Belfast) played his part so effectively that he did not fail to finish the deal by extracting a handsome commission for himself, which found its way subsequently to the coffers of the Ulster Unionist Council. But he compensated the Company by making a suggestion for improving the mechanism of the Maxim-gun which the great ordnance manufacturers permanently adopted without having to pay for any patent rights.

Major Crawford was, however, by no means the only person who was at this time bringing arms and ammunition into Ulster, which, as already explained, although not illegal, could not be safely done openly on a large scale. Ammunition in small quantities dribbled into Belfast pretty constantly, many amateur importers deriving pleasurable excitement from feeling themselves conspirators, and affording amusement to others by the tales told of the ingenious expedients resorted to by the smugglers.

There was a dock porter at Belfast, an intense admirer of Sir Edward Carson, who was the retailer of one of the best of these stories. He was always on the look-out for the leader arriving by the Liverpool steamer, and would allow no one else, if he could help it, to handle the great man's hand-baggage; and when Carson was not a passenger, any of his satellites who happened to be travelling came in for vicarious attention. Thus, it happened on one occasion that the writer, arriving alone from Liverpool, was hailed from the shore before the boat was made fast. "Is Sir Edward on board?" A shake of the head brought a look of pathetic disappointment to the face of the hero-worshipper; but he was on board before the gangway was down and busy collecting the belongings of the leader's unworthy substitute. When laden with these and half-way down the gangway he

stopped, and, entirely careless of the fact that he was obstructing a number of passengers impatient to land, he turned and whispered—a whisper that might be heard thirty yards off—with a knowing wink of the eye:

"We're getting in plenty of stuff now."

"Yes, yes," was the reply. "Never mind about that now; put those things on a car."

But he continued, without budging from the gangway, "Och aye, we're getting in plenty; but my God, didn't Mrs. Blank o' Dungannon bate all? Did ye hear about her?"

"No, I never heard of Mrs. Blank of Dungannon. But do hurry along, my good man; you're keeping back all the passengers."

"What! ye never heard o' Mrs. Blank o' Dungannon? Wait now till I tell ye. Mrs. Blank came off this boat not a fortnight ago, an' as she came down this gangway I declare to God you'd ha' swore she was within a week of her time—and divil a ha'porth the matter with her, only cartridges. An' the fun was that the Custom House boys knowed rightly what it was, but they dursn't lay a hand on her nor search her, for fear they were wrong."

This admiring tribute to the heroic matron of Dungannon—whose real name was not concealed by the porter—was heard by a number of people, and probably most of them thought themselves compensated by the story for the delay it caused them in leaving the steamer.

By the summer of 1913 several thousands of rifles had been brought into Ulster; but in May of that year the mishap occurred to which Lord Roberts referred in his letter to Colonel Hickman on the 4th of June, when he wrote: "I am sorry to read about the capture of rifles."[1] Crawford had been obliged to find some place in London for storing the arms which he was procuring from his friends in Hamburg, and with the help of Sir William Bull, M.P. for Hammersmith, the yard of an old-fashioned inn in that district was found where it was believed they would be safe until means of transporting them to the North of Ireland could be devised. The inn was taken

[1] *Ante*, p. 161.

by a firm calling itself John Ferguson & Co., the active member of which was Sir William Bull's brother-in-law, Captain Budden; and the business appeared to consist of dealing in second-hand scientific instruments and machinery, curiosities, antique armour and weapons, old furniture, and so forth, which were brought in very heavy cases and deposited in the yard. For a time it proved useful, and the Maxims from Woolwich passed safely through the Hammersmith store. But the London police got wind of the Hammersmith Armoury, and seized a consignment of between six and seven thousand excellent Italian rifles. A rusty and little-known Act of Parliament had to be dug up to provide legal authority for the seizure. Many sportsmen and others then learnt for the first time that, under the Gun-barrel Proof Act, 1868, every gun-barrel in England must bear the Gun-makers' Company's proof-mark showing that its strength has been tested and approved. As the penalty for being in possession of guns not so marked was a fine of £2 per barrel, to have put in a claim for the Italian rifles seized at Hammersmith would have involved a payment of more than £12,000, and would have given the Government information as to the channel through which they had been imported. No move was made, therefore, so far as the firearms were concerned, but the bayonets attached to them, for the seizure of which there was no legal justification, were claimed by Crawford's agent in Hamburg, and eventually reached Ulster safely by another route. About the same time a consignment of half a million rounds of small-arm ammunition, which was discovered by the authorities through faulty packing in cement-bags, was also confiscated in another part of the country.

These losses convinced Crawford that a complete change of method must be adopted if faith was to be kept with the Ulster Volunteers, who were implicitly trusting their leaders to provide them with weapons to enable them to make good the Covenant. More than a year before this time he had told the special Committee dealing with arms, to which he was immediately responsible, that, in his judgment, the only way of dealing effectively with the

problem was not by getting small quantities smuggled from time to time by various devices and through disguised ordinary trade channels, but by bringing off a grand *coup*, as if running a blockade in time of war. He had crossed the Channel on purpose to submit this view to Sir Edward Carson and Captain Craig early in 1912, but at that time nothing was done to give effect to it.

But the seizure of so large a number as six thousand rifles at a time when the political situation looked like moving towards a crisis in the near future, made necessary a bolder attempt to procure the necessary arms. When General Sir George Richardson took command of the U.V.F. in July 1913 he placed Captain (afterwards Lieut.-Colonel) Wilfrid Bliss Spender on his staff, and soon afterwards appointed him A.Q.M.G. of the Forces. Captain Spender's duties comprised the supply of equipment, arms, and ammunition, the organisation of transport, and the supervision of communications. He was now requested to confer with Major Fred Crawford with a view to preparing a scheme for procuring arms and ammunition, to be submitted to a special sub-committee appointed to deal with this matter, of which Captain James Craig was chairman. Spender gave his attention mainly to the difficulties that would attend the landing and distribution of arms if they reached Ulster in safety; Crawford said he could undertake to purchase and bring them from a foreign port. Crawford's proposed *modus operandi* may be given in his own words:

"I would immediately go to Hamburg and see B. S. [the Hebrew dealer in firearms with whom he had been in communication for some six or seven years, and whom he had found perfectly honest, and not at all grasping], and consult him as to what he had to offer. I would purchase 25,000 to 30,000 rifles, modern weapons if possible, and not the Italian Vetteli rifles we had been getting, all to take the same ammunition and fitted with bayonets. I would purchase a suitable steamer of 600 tons in some foreign port and load her up with the arms, and either bring her in direct or transfer the cargo to a local steamer in some estuary or bay on the Scottish coast. I felt confident,

though I knew the difficulties in front of me, that I could carry it through all right." [1]

The sub-committee accepted Crawford's proposal, and, when it had been confirmed by Headquarters Council, he was commissioned to go to Hamburg to see how the land lay. On arriving there he found that B. S. had still in store ten thousand Vetteli rifles and a million rounds of ammunition for them, which he had been holding for Crawford for two years. After a day or two the dealer laid three alternative proposals before his Ulster customer: (*a*) Twenty thousand Vetteli rifles, with bayonets (ammunition would have to be specially manufactured). (*b*) Thirty thousand Russian rifles with bayonets (lacking scabbards) and ammunition. (*c*) Fifteen thousand new Austrian, and five thousand German army rifles with bayonets, both to take standard Mannlicher cartridges.

The last mentioned of these alternatives was much the most costly, being double the price of the first and nearly treble that of the second; but it had great advantages over the other two. Ammunition for the Italian weapons was only manufactured in Italy, and, if further supplies should be required, could only be got from that country. The Russian rifles were perfectly new and unused, but were of an obsolete pattern; they were single-loaders, and fresh supplies of cartridges would be nearly as difficult to procure for them as for the Italian. The Austrian and German patterns were both first-rate; the rifles were up-to-date clip-loaders, and, what was the most important consideration, ammunition for them would be easily procurable in the United Kingdom or from America or Canada.

But the difference in cost was so great that Crawford returned to Belfast to explain matters to his Committee, calling in London on his way to inform Carson and Craig. He strongly urged the acceptance of the third alternative offer, laying stress, among other considerations, on the moral effect on men who knew they had in their hands the most modern weapon with all latest improvements. Carson was content to be guided on a technical matter of this

[1] From a manuscript narrative by Colonel F. H. Crawford.

sort by the judgment of a man whom he knew to be an expert, and as James Craig, who was in control of the fund ear-marked for the purchase of arms, also agreed, Crawford had not much difficulty in persuading the Committee when he reached Belfast, although at first they were rather staggered by the difference in cost between the various proposals.

It was not until the beginning of February 1914 that Crawford returned to Hamburg to accept this offer, and to make arrangements with B. S. for carrying out the rest of his scheme for transporting his precious but dangerous cargo to Ulster. On his way through London he called again on Carson.

"I pointed out to Sir Edward, my dear old Chief," says Crawford in a written account of the interview, "that some of my Committee had no idea of the seriousness of the undertaking, and, when they did realise what they were in for, might want to back out of it. I said, 'Once I cross this time to Hamburg there is no turning back with me, no matter what the circumstances are so far as my personal safety is concerned; and no contrary orders from the Committee to cancel what they have agreed to with me will I obey. I shall carry out the *coup* if I lose my life in the attempt. Now, Sir Edward, you know what I am about to undertake, and the risks those who back me up must run. Are you willing to back me to the finish in this undertaking? If you are not, I don't go. But, if you are, I would go even if I knew I should not return; it is for Ulster and her freedom I am working, and this alone.' I so well remember that scene. We were alone; Sir Edward was sitting opposite to me. When I had finished, his face was stern and grim, and there was a glint in his eye. He rose to his full height, looking me in the eye; he advanced to where I was sitting and stared down at me, and shook his clenched fist in my face, and said in a steady, determined voice, which thrilled me and which I shall never forget: 'Crawford, I'll see you through this business, if I should have to go to prison for it.' I rose from my chair; I held out my hand and said, 'Sir Edward, that is all I want. I leave to-night; good-bye.'"

Next day Crawford was in Hamburg. He immediately

concluded his agreement with B. S., and began making arrangements for carrying out the plan he had outlined to the Committee in Belfast. As will be seen in the next chapter, he was actually in the middle of this adventure at the very time when Seely and Churchill were worrying lest "evil-disposed persons" should raid and rob the scantily stocked Government Stores at Omagh and Enniskillen.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VOYAGE OF ADVENTURE

ALTHOUGH Mr. Lloyd George's message to mankind on New Year's Day, 1914, was that "Anglo-German relations were far more friendly than for years past,"[1] and that there was therefore no need to strengthen the British Navy, it may be doubted, with the knowledge we now possess, whether the German Government would have been greatly incensed at the idea of a cargo of firearms finding its way from Hamburg to Ireland in the spring of that year without the knowledge of the British Government. But if that were the case Fred Crawford had no reason to suspect it. German surveillance was always both efficient and obtrusive, and he had to make his preparations under a vigilance by the authorities which showed no signs of laxity.

Those preparations involved the assembling and the packing of 20,000 modern rifles, 15,000 of which had to be brought from a factory in Austria; 10,000 Italian rifles previously purchased, which B. S. had in store; bayonets for all the firearms; and upwards of 3,000,000 rounds of small-arm ammunition. The packing of the arms was a matter to which Crawford gave particular attention. He kept in mind the circumstances under which he expected them to be landed in Ulster. Avoidance of confusion and rapidity of handling were of the first importance. Rifles, bayonets, and ammunition must be not separated in bulk, requiring to be laboriously reassembled at their destination. He therefore insisted that parcels should be made up containing five rifles in each, with bayonets to match, and 100 rounds of ammunition per rifle, each parcel weighing about 75 lbs. He attached so much importance to this system of packing that he adhered to it

[1] *Annual Register*, 1914, p. 1.

even after discovering that it would cost about £2,000, and would take more than a month to complete.

While the work of packing was going on, Crawford, who found he was exciting the curiosity of the Hamburg police, kept out of sight as much as possible, and he paid more than one visit to the Committee in Belfast, leaving the supervision to the skipper and packer, whom he had found he could trust. In the meantime, by advertisements in the Scandinavian countries, he was looking out for a suitable steamer to carry the cargo. For a crew his thoughts turned to his old friend, Andrew Agnew, skipper in the employment of the Antrim Iron Ore Company. Happily he was not only able to secure the services of Agnew himself, but Agnew brought with him his mate and his chief and second engineers. This was a great gain; for they were not only splendid men at their job, but were men willing to risk their liberty or their lives for the Ulster cause. Deck-hands and firemen would be procurable at whatever port a steamer was to be bought.

Several vessels were offered in response to Crawford's advertisements, and on the 16th of March, when the packing of the arms was well advanced, Crawford, Agnew, and his chief engineer went to Norway to inspect these steamers. Eventually they selected the s.s. *Fanny*, which had just returned to Bergen with a cargo of coal from Newcastle. She was only an eight-knot vessel, but her skipper, a Norwegian, gave a favourable report of her sea-going qualities and coal consumption, and Agnew and his engineer were satisfied by their inspection of her. The deal was quickly completed, and the Captain and his Norwegian crew willingly consented to remain in charge of the *Fanny*; and, in order to enable her to sail under the Norwegian flag, as a precaution against possible confiscation in British waters, it was arranged that the Captain should be the nominal purchaser, giving Crawford a mortgage for her full value.

Then, leaving Agnew to get sufficient stores on board the *Fanny* for a three-months' cruise, Crawford returned to Hamburg on the 20th, and thence to Belfast to report progress. Agnew's orders were to bring the *Fanny* in three weeks' time to a rendezvous marked on the chart

between the Danish islands of Langeland and Fünen, where he was to pick up the cargo of arms, which Crawford would bring in lighters from Hamburg through the Kiel Canal.

While Crawford was in Belfast arrangements were made to enable him to keep in communication with Spender, so that in case of necessity he could be warned not to approach the Irish coast, but to cruise in the Baltic till a more favourable opportunity. He was to let Spender know later where he could be reached with final instructions as to landing the arms; the rendezvous so agreed upon subsequently was Lough Laxford, a wild and inaccessible spot on the west coast of Sutherlandshire. Crawford was warned by B. S. that he was far from confident of a successful end to their labours at Hamburg. He had never before shipped anything like so large a number of firearms; and the long process of packing, and Crawford's own mysterious coming and going, would be certain to excite suspicion, which would reach the secret agents of the British Government, and lead either to a protest addressed to the German authorities, followed by a prohibition on shipping the arms, or to confiscation by the British authorities when the cargo entered British territorial waters.

These fears must have been present to the mind of B. S. when he met Crawford at the station in Hamburg on the 27th on his return from Belfast, for the precautions taken to avoid being followed gave their movements the character of an adventure by one of Stanley Weyman's heroes of romance. Whether any suspicion had in fact been aroused remains unknown. Anyhow, the barges were ready laden, with a tug waiting till the tide should serve about midnight for making a start down the Elbe, and through the canal to Kiel. The modest sum of £10 procured an order authorising the tug and barges to proceed through the canal without stopping, and requiring other shipping to let them pass. A black flag was the signal of this privileged position, which suggested the "Jolly Roger" to Crawford's thoughts, and gave a sense of insolent audacity when great liners of ten or fifteen thousand tons were seen making way for a tug-boat towing a couple of lighters.

For the success of the enterprise up to this point Crawford was greatly indebted to the Jew, B. S. From first to last this gentleman "played the game" with sterling honesty and straightforward dealing that won his customers' warm admiration. Several times he accepted Crawford's word as sufficient security when cash was not immediately forthcoming, and in no instance did he bear out the character traditionally attributed to his race.

On arrival at Kiel, Crawford, after a short absence from the tug, was informed that three men had been inquiring from the lightermen and the tug's skipper about the nature and destination of the cargo. All such evidences of curiosity on the subject were rather alarming, but it turned out that the visitors were probably Mexicans—of what political party there it would be impossible to guess—whose interest had been aroused by the rumour, which Crawford had encouraged, that guns were being shipped to that distracted Republic. Still more alarming was the arrival on board the tug of a German official in resplendent uniform, who insisted that he must inspect the cargo. Crawford knew no German, but the shipping agent who accompanied him produced papers showing that all formalities had been complied with, and all requisite authorisation obtained. Neither official papers, however, nor arguments made any impression on the officer until it occurred to Crawford to produce a 100-marks note, which proved much more persuasive, and sent the official on his way rejoicing, with expressions of civility on both sides.

The relief of the Ulsterman when the last of the Kiel forts was left behind, and he knew that his cargo was clear of Germany, may be imagined. A night was spent crossing Kiel Bay, and in the morning of the 29th they were close to Langeland, and approaching the rendezvous with the *Fanny*. She was there waiting, and Agnew, in obedience to orders, had already painted out her name on bows and stern. The next thing was to transfer the arms from the lighters to the *Fanny*. Crawford was apprehensive lest the Danish authorities should take an interest in the proceedings if the work was carried out in the narrow

channel between the islands, and he proposed, as it was quite calm, to defer operations till they were further from the shore. But the Norwegian Captain declared that he had often transhipped cargo at this spot, and that there was no danger whatever. Nevertheless, Crawford's fears were realised. Before the work was half finished a Danish Port Officer came on board, asked what the cargo comprised, and demanded to see the ship's papers. According to the manifest the *Fanny* was bound for Iceland with a general cargo, part of which was to be shipped at Bergen. The Danish officer then spent half an hour examining the bales, and, although he did not open any of them, Crawford felt no doubt he knew perfectly the nature of their contents. Finally he insisted on carrying off the papers, both of the *Fanny* and the tug-boat, saying that all the information must be forwarded to Copenhagen to be dealt with by the Government authorities, but that the papers would be returned early next morning.

One can well believe Crawford when he says that he suffered " mental agony " that night. After all that he had planned, and all that he had accomplished by many months of personal energy and resource, he saw complete and ignominious failure staring him in the face. He realised the heavy financial loss to the Ulster Loyalists, for his cargo represented about £70,000 of their money; and he realised the bitter disappointment of their hopes, which was far worse than any loss of money. He pictured to himself what must happen in the morning—" to have to follow a torpedo-boat into the naval base and lie there till the whole Ulster scheme was unravelled and known to the world as a ghastly failure, and the Province and Sir Edward and all the leaders the laughing stock of the world "—and the thought of it all plunged him almost into despair.

Almost, but not quite. He was not the man to give way to despair. If it came to the worst he would " put all the foreign crew and their belongings into the boats and send them off; Agnew and I would arm ourselves with a bundle of rifles, and cut it open and have 500 rounds to fight any attempt to board us, and if we slipped this

by any chance, he and I would bring her to England together, he on deck and I in the engine-room. He knew all about navigation and I knew all about engines, having been a marine engineer in my youth."

But a less desperate job called for immediate attention. The men engaged in transferring the cargo from the barges to the steamer wanted to knock off work for the night; but the offer of double pay persuaded them to stick to it, and they worked with such good will that by midnight every bale was safely below hatches in the *Fanny*. Crawford then instructed the shipping agent to be off in the tug at break of day, giving him letters to post which would apprise the Committee in Belfast of what had happened, and give them the means of communicating with himself according to previously concerted plans.

Before morning a change occurred in the weather, which Crawford regarded as providential. He was gladdened by the sight of a sea churned white by half a gale, while a mist lay on the water, reducing visibility to about 300 yards. It would be impossible for the Port Officer's motor-boat to face such a sea, or, if it did, to find the *Fanny*, unless guided by her fog-whistle. As soon as eight o'clock had passed—the hour by which the return of the ship's papers had been promised—Crawford weighed anchor, and crept out of the narrow channel under cover of the fog, only narrowly escaping going aground on the way among the banks and shallows that made it impossible to sail before daylight, but eventually the open sea was safely reached. But the *Fanny* was now without papers, and in law was a pirate ship. It was therefore desirable for her to change her costume. As many hands as possible were turned to the task of giving a new colour to the funnel and making some other effective alterations in her appearance, including a new name on her bows and stern. Thus renovated, and after a delay of some days, caused by trifling mishaps, she left the Cattegat behind and steered a course for British waters.

The original plan had been to set a course for Iceland, and, when north of the Shetlands, to turn to the southward to Lough Laxford, the agreed rendezvous with Spender.

But the incident at Langeland, which had made the Danish authorities suspect illegal traffic with Iceland, made a change of plan imperative. Before leaving Danish waters Crawford tried to communicate this change to Belfast. But, meantime, information had reached Belfast of certain measures being taken by the Government, and Spender, hoping to catch Crawford before he left Kiel, went to Dublin to telegraph from there. In Dublin he was dismayed to read in the newspapers that a mysterious vessel called the *Fanny*, said to be carrying arms for Ulster, had been captured by the Danish authorities in the Baltic. For several days no further news reached Belfast, where it was assumed that the whole enterprise had failed; and then a code message informed the Committee that Crawford was in London.

Spender at once went over to see him, in order to warn him not to bring the arms to Ireland for the present. He was to take them back to Hamburg, or throw them overboard, or sink the *Fanny* and take to her boats, according to circumstances. But in London, instead of Crawford, Spender found the Hamburg skipper and packer, who told him of Crawford's escape from Langeland with the loss of the ship's papers. Spender, knowing nothing of Crawford's change of plan, and anxious to convey to him the latest instructions, went off on a wild-goose chase to the Highlands of Scotland, where he spent the best part of an unhappy week watching the waves tumbling in Lough Laxford, and looking as anxiously as Tristan for the expected ship.

Meantime the *Fanny* had crossed the North Sea, and Crawford sent Agnew ashore at Yarmouth on the 7th of April with orders to hurry to Belfast, where he was to procure another steamer and bring it to a rendezvous at Lundy Island, in the Bristol Channel. Crawford himself, having rechristened the *Fanny* for the second time (this time the *Doreen*), proceeded down the English Channel, where he had a rather adventurous cruise in a gale of wind. He kept close to the French coast, to avoid any unwelcome attentions in British waters, but on the way had an attack of malaria, which the Captain thought so

grave that, no doubt with the most humane motives, he declared his intention of putting Crawford ashore at Dunkirk to save his life, a design which no persuasion short of Crawford's handling of his revolver in true pirate fashion would make the Norwegian abandon.

In the heavy seas of the Channel the *Doreen* could not make more than four knots, and she was consequently twenty-four hours late for the rendezvous with Agnew at Lundy, where she arrived on the 11th of April. The Bristol Channel seemed to swarm with pilot boats eager to be of service, whose inquisitive and expert eyes were anything but welcome to the custodian of Ulster's rifles; and to his highly strung imagination every movement of every trawler appeared to betoken suspicion. And, indeed, they were not without excuse for curiosity; for, a foreign steamer whose course seemed indeterminate, now making for Cardiff and now for St. Ives, observed at one time north-east of Lundy and a few hours later south of the island—a tramp, in fact, that was obviously "loitering" with no ascertainable destination, was enough to keep telescopes to the eyes of Devon pilots and fisher-folk, and to set their tongues wagging. But there was no help for it. Crawford could not leave the rendezvous till Agnew arrived, and was forced to wander round Lundy and up and down the Bristol Channel for two days and nights, until, at 5 a.m. on Monday morning, the 13th of April, a signal from a passing steamer, the *Balmerino*, gave the welcome tidings that Agnew was on board and was proceeding to sea.

When the two steamers were sufficiently far from Lundy lighthouse and other prying eyes to make friendly intercourse safe, Agnew came on board the *Doreen*, bringing with him another North Irish seaman whom he introduced to Crawford. This man handed to Crawford a paper he had brought from Belfast. It was typewritten; it bore no address and no signature; it was no doubt a duplicate of what Spender had taken to the Highlands, for its purport, as given by Crawford from memory, was to the following effect: "Owing to great changes since you left, and altered circumstances, the Committee think it would be

unwise to bring the cargo here at present, and instruct you to proceed to the Baltic and cruise there for three months, keeping in touch with the Committee, or else to store the goods at Hamburg till required."

The " great changes " referred to were the operations that led to the Curragh incident, the story of which Crawford now learnt from Agnew. The presence of the fleet at Lamlash, and of destroyers off Carrickfergus, was enough to make the Committee deem it an inopportune moment for Crawford to bring his goods to Belfast Lough. But the latter was hardly in a condition to appreciate the gravity of the situation, and the indignation which the missive aroused in him is intelligible. After all he had come through, the ups and downs, dangers and escapes—far more varied than have been here recorded—the disappointment at being ordered back was cruel ; and in his eyes such instructions were despicably pusillanimous. The caution that had prompted his instructors to leave the order unsigned moved him to contempt, and in his wrath he was confident that " the Chief at any rate had nothing to do with it." He told the messenger that he did not know who had sent the paper, and did not want to know, and instructed him to take it back and inform the senders that, as it bore no signature, no date, no address, and no official stamp, he declined to recognise it and refused to obey it ; and, further, that unless he received within six days properly authenticated instructions for delivering his cargo, he would run his ship ashore at high water in the County Down, and let the Ulstermen salve as much as they could when the tide ebbed.

But Crawford determined to make another effort first to accomplish his task by less desperate methods. He therefore decided to accompany the messenger back to Belfast. The *Doreen*, late *Fanny*, was too foreign-looking to pass unchallenged up Belfast Lough, but he believed that if the cargo could be transhipped to a vessel known to all watchers on the North Irish coast, a policy of audacity would have a good chance of success. The s.s. *Balmerino*, which had brought Agnew and the messenger to Lundy, was such a vessel ; her owner, Mr. Sam Kelly, was

an intimate friend of Crawford's ; and if he could see Kelly the matter, he hoped, might be quickly arranged. The reliance which Crawford placed in Mr. Sam Kelly was fully justified, for the assistance rendered by this gentleman was essential to the success of the enterprise. He it was who freely supplied two steamers, with crews and stevedores, thereby enabling the last part of this adventurous voyage to be carried through ; and the willingness with which Mr. Kelly risked financial loss, and much besides, placed Ulster under an obligation to him for which he sought no recompense.

Crawford accordingly went off in the *Balmerino*, landed in South Wales on Tuesday, the 14th of April, and hastened by the quickest route to Belfast. Agnew took charge of the *Doreen*, with instructions to be at the Tuskar Light, on the Wexford coast, on the following Friday night, the 17th, and to return there every night until Crawford rejoined him. A friend of Crawford's, Mr. Richard Cowser, with whom he had a conversation on the telephone from Dublin, met him at the railway-station in Belfast and told him that he had a motor waiting to take him to Craigavon, where the Council was expecting him, and that he would see Mr. Sam Kelly, the owner of the *Balmerino*, there also. This news made Crawford very angry. He accused his friend of breach of confidence in letting anyone know that he was coming to Belfast ; he declared he would have nothing to do with the Council after the unsigned orders he had received at Lundy ; and he besought his friend to take his car to Craigavon and bring back Kelly, repeating his determination to bring in his cargo, even if he had to run his ship ashore to do so. Mr. Cowser replied that this would be very disappointing to Sir Edward Carson, who was waiting for Crawford at Craigavon, having come from London on purpose for this Council Meeting. " What ! " exclaimed Crawford, " is Sir Edward there ? Why did you not say so at once ? Where is your car ? Let us waste no time till I see the Chief and report to him."

That evening of the 14th of April, at Craigavon, was a memorable one for all who were present at the meeting. Carson invited Crawford to relate all he had done, and to

explain how he proposed to proceed. The latter did not mince matters in saying what he thought of the Lundy instructions, which he again declared angrily he intended to disobey. When he had finished his narrative and his protestations against what he considered a cowardly policy —a policy that would deprive Ulster of succour as sorely needed as Derry needed the *Mountjoy* to break the boom— Carson put a few questions to him in regard to the feasibility of his plans. Crawford explained the advantage it would be to transfer the cargo from the *Fanny* to a local steamer, which he felt confident he could bring into Larne, and after the transhipment he would send the *Fanny* straight back to the Baltic, where she could settle her account with the Danish authorities and recover her papers.

Some members of the Council were sceptical about the possibility of transhipping the cargo at sea, but Crawford, who had fully discussed it with Agnew, believed that if favoured by calm weather it could be done. When Carson, after hearing all that was to be said on both sides in the long debate between Fabius and Hotspur, finally supported the latter, the question was decided. There was no split—there never was in these deliberations in Ulster; those whose judgment was overruled always supported loyally the policy decided upon.

Immediate measures were then taken to give effect to the decision. Kelly knew of a suitable craft, the s.s. *Clydevalley*, for sale at that moment in Glasgow, which would be in Belfast next morning with a cargo of coal. This was providential. A collier familiar to every longshoreman in Belfast Lough, carrying on her usual trade this week, could hardly be suspected of carrying rifles when she returned next week ostensibly in the same line of business. It was settled that Crawford should cross to Glasgow at once and buy her; the steamer, when bought, was to go from Belfast to Llandudno, where she would pick up Crawford on the sands, and proceed to keep the rendezvous with Agnew at the Tuskar Light on Friday; and, after taking over the *Fanny's* cargo, would then steam boldly up Belfast Lough and through the Musgrave Channel to

the Belfast docks, where he undertook to arrive on the Friday week, the 24th of April, the various proposals which named Larne, Bangor, and Donaghadee as ports of discharge having all been rejected after full discussion. This last decision was not approved by Crawford, for he and Spender had long before this time agreed that Larne harbour was the proper place to land the arms, both because the large number of country roads leading to it would facilitate rapid distribution, and because it would be more difficult for the authorities to interfere with the disembarkation there than at any of the other ports.

Before parting from the Council Crawford made it quite clear that during the remainder of the adventure he would recognise no orders of any kind unless they bore the autograph signature of Sir Edward Carson. On this understanding he set out for Glasgow, bought the *Clydevalley*, and went by train to Llandudno to await her arrival. These affairs had left very little margin of time to spare. The *Clydevalley* could not be at Llandudno before the morning of the 17th, and Agnew would be looking for her at the Tuskar the same evening. As it actually turned out she only arrived at the Welsh watering-place late that night, and, after picking up Crawford, who had spent an anxious day on the beach, arrived off the Wexford coast at daybreak on Saturday, the 18th. Not a sign of the *Fanny* was to be seen all that day, or the following night; and when the skipper of the *Clydevalley*, who had been on the *Balmerino* and was privy to the arrangements with Agnew, gave Crawford reason to think there might have been a misunderstanding as to the rendezvous, Yarmouth having been also mentioned in that connection, Crawford was in a condition almost of desperation.

It was, indeed, a situation to test the nerves, to say nothing of the temper, of even the most resolute. It was Sunday, and Crawford had undertaken to be at Copeland Island, at the mouth of Belfast Lough, on Friday evening for final landing instructions. The precious cargo, which had passed safely through so many hazards, had vanished and was he knew not where. He had heard nothing of the *Fanny* (or *Doreen*) since he landed at Tenby five days

previously. Had she been captured by a destroyer from Pembroke, or overhauled, pirate as she was without papers, by Customs officials from Rosslare? Or had Agnew mistaken his instructions, and risked all the dangers of the English Channel in a fruitless voyage to Yarmouth, where, even if still undetected, the *Fanny* would be too far away to reach Copeland by Friday, unless Agnew could be communicated with at once?

There was only one way in which such communication could be managed, and that way Crawford now took with characteristic promptitude and energy. The *Clydevalley* crossed the Irish Sea to Fishguard, where he took train on Sunday night to London and Yarmouth, having first made arrangements with the skipper for keeping in touch. But there was no trace of the *Fanny* at Yarmouth, and no word from Agnew at the Post Office. There appeared to be no solution of the problem, and every precious hour that slipped away made ultimate failure more menacing. But at two o'clock the outlook entirely changed. A second visit to the Post Office was rewarded by a telegram in code from Agnew saying all was well, and that he would be at Holyhead to pick up Crawford on Tuesday evening. There was just time to catch a London train that arrived in time for the Irish mail from Euston. On Tuesday morning Crawford was pacing the breakwater at Holyhead, and a few hours later he was discussing matters with Agnew in the little cabin of the *Clydevalley*.

The latter had amply made up for the loss of time caused by some misunderstanding as to the rendezvous at the Tuskar, for he was able to show Crawford, to his intense delight, that the cargo had all been safely and successfully transferred to the hold of the *Clydevalley* in a bay on the Welsh coast, mainly at night. Some sixteen transport labourers from Belfast, willing Ulster hands, had shifted the stuff in less than half the time taken by Germans at Langeland over the same job. There was, therefore, nothing more to be done except to steam leisurely to Copeland, for which there was ample time before Friday evening. The *Fanny* had departed to an appointed rendezvous on the Baltic coast of Denmark.

It was now the turn of the *Clydevalley* to yield up her obscure identity, and to assume an historic name appropriate to the adventure she was bringing to a triumphant climax—a name of good omen in Ulster ears. Strips of canvas, 6 feet long, were cut and painted with white letters on a black ground, and affixed to bows and stern, so that the men waiting at Copeland might hail the arrival of the *Mountjoy II.*

Off Copeland Island a small vessel was waiting, which Agnew recognised as a tender belonging to Messrs. Workman & Clark. The men on board, as soon as they could make out the name of the approaching vessel, understood at once, and raised a ringing cheer. Two of them were seen gesticulating and hailing the *Mountjoy.* Crawford, suspecting fresh orders to retreat, paid no attention, and told Agnew to hold on his course ; and even when presently he was able to recognise Mr. Cowser and Mr. Dawson Bates on board the tender, and to hear them shouting that they had important instructions for him, he still refused to let them come on board. "If the orders are not signed by Sir Edward Carson," he shouted back, "you can take them back to where they came from." But the orders they brought had been signed by the leader, a special messenger having been sent to London to obtain his signature, and the change of plan they indicated was, in fact, just what Crawford desired. The bulk of the arms were to be landed at Larne, the port he had always favoured, and lesser quantities were to be taken to Bangor and Donaghadee.

It was 10.30 that night, the 24th of April 1914, when the *Mountjoy II* steamed alongside the landing-stage at Larne, where she had been eagerly awaited for a couple of hours. The voyage of adventure was over. Fred Crawford, with the able and zealous help of Andrew Agnew, had accomplished the difficult and dangerous task he had undertaken, and a service had been rendered to Ulster not unworthy to rank beside the breaking of the boom across the Foyle by the first and more renowned *Mountjoy.*

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE BRINK OF CIVIL WAR

THE arrangements that had been made for the landing and disposal of the arms when they arrived in port were the work of an extremely efficient and complete organisation. In the previous summer Captain Spender, it will be remembered, had been appointed to a position on Sir George Richardson's staff which included in its duties that of the organisation of transport. A railway board, a supply board, and a transport board had been formed, on which leading business men willingly served; every U.V.F. unit had its horse transport, and in addition a special motor corps, organised in squadrons, and a special corps of motor-lorries were formed.

More than half the owners of motor-cars in Ulster placed their cars at the disposal of the motor corps, to be used as and when required. The corps was organised in sections of four cars each, and in squadrons of seventeen cars each, with motor cyclist despatch-riders; a signalling corps of despatch-riders and signallers completed the organisation. The lively interest aroused by the practice and displays of the last-mentioned corps did much to promote the high standard of proficiency attained by its "flag-waggers," many of whom were women and girls. In particular the signalling-station at Bangor gained a reputation which attracted many English sympathisers with Ulster to pay it a visit when they came to Belfast for the great Unionist demonstrations.

The despatch-riders on motor-cycles made the Ulster Council independent of the Post Office, which for very good reasons they used as little as possible. Post-houses were opened at all the most important centres in Ulster, between which messages were transmitted by despatch-rider or

signal according to the nature of the intervening country. Along the coast of Down and Antrim the organisation of signals was complete and effective. The usefulness of the despatch-riders' corps was fully tested and proved during the Curragh Incident, when news of all that was taking place at the Curragh was received by this means two or three times a day at the Old Town Hall in Belfast, where there was much information of what was going on that was unknown at the Irish Office in London.

All this organisation was at the disposal of the leaders for handling the arms brought in the hold of the *Mountjoy II.* The perfection of the arrangements for the immediate distribution of the rifles and ammunition among the loyalist population, and the almost miraculous precision with which they were carried out on that memorable Friday night, extorted the admiration even of the most inveterate political enemies of Ulster. The smoothness with which the machinery of organisation worked was only possible on account of the hearty willingness of all the workers, combined with the discipline to which they gladly submitted themselves.

The whole U.V.F. was warned for a trial mobilisation on the evening of the 24th of April, and the owners of all motor-cars and lorries were requested to co-operate. Very few either of the Volunteers or the motor owners knew that anything more than manœuvres by night for practice purposes was to take place. All motors from certain specified districts were ordered to be at Larne by 8 o'clock in the evening; from other districts the vehicles were to assemble at Bangor and Donaghadee respectively, at a later hour. All the roads leading to these ports were patrolled by volunteers, and at every cross-roads over the greater part of nine counties men of the local battalions were stationed to give directions to motor-drivers who might not be familiar with the roads. At certain points these men were provided with reserve supplies of petrol, and with repairing tools that might be needed in case of breakdown. It is a remarkable testimony to the zeal of these men for the cause that, although none of them knew he was taking part in an exciting adventure, not one, so

far as is known, left his post throughout a cold and wet night, having received orders not to go home till daybreak. And these were men, it must be remembered, who before putting on the felt hats, puttees, and bandoliers which constituted their uniform, had already done a full day's work, and were not to receive a sixpence for their night's job.

At the three ports of discharge large forces of volunteers were concentrated. Sir George Richardson, G.O.C. in C., remained in Belfast through the night, being kept fully and constantly informed of the progress of events by signal and motor-cyclist despatch-riders. Captain James Craig was in charge of the operations at Bangor; at Larne General Sir William Adair was in command, with Captain Spender as Staff officer.

The attention of the Customs authorities in Belfast was diverted by a clever stratagem. A tramp steamer was brought up the Musgrave Channel after dark, her conduct being as furtive and suspicious as it was possible to make it appear. At the same time a large wagon was brought to the docks as if awaiting a load. The skipper of the tramp took an unconscionable time, by skilful blundering, in bringing his craft to her moorings. The suspicions of the authorities were successfully aroused; but every possible hindrance was put in their way when they began to investigate. The hour was too late: could they not wait till daylight? No? Well, then, what was their authority? When that was settled, it appeared that the skipper had mislaid his keys and could not produce the ship's papers —and so on. By these devices the belief of the officers that they had caught the offender they were after was increasingly confirmed every minute, while several hours passed before they were allowed to realise that they had discovered a mare's-nest. For when at last they "would stand no more nonsense," and had the hatches opened and the papers produced, the latter were quite in order, and the cargo—which they wasted a little additional time in turning over—contained nothing but coal.

Meantime the real business was proceeding twenty miles away. All communications by wire from the three ports

were blocked by " earthing " the wires, so as to cause short circuit. The police and coast-guards were " peacefully picketed," as trade unionists would call it, in their various barracks—they were shut in and strongly guarded. No conflict took place anywhere between the authorities and the volunteers, and the only casualty of any kind was the unfortunate death of one coast-guardsman from heart disease at Donaghadee.

At Larne, where much the largest portion of the *Mountjoy's* cargo was landed, a triple cordon of Volunteers surrounded the town and harbour, and no one without a pass was allowed through. The motors arrived with a punctuality that was wonderful, considering that many of them had come from long distances. As the drivers arrived near the town and found themselves in an apparently endless procession of similar vehicles, their astonishment and excitement became intense. Only when close to the harbour did they learn what they were there for, and received instructions how to proceed. They had more than two hours to wait in drizzling rain before the *Mountjoy* appeared round the point of Islandmagee, although her approach had been made known to Spender by signal at dusk. There were about five hundred motor vehicles assembled at Larne alone, and such an invasion of flaring head-lights gave the inhabitants of the little town unwonted excitement. Practically all the able-bodied men of the place were either on duty as Volunteers or were willing workers in the landing of the arms. The women stood at their doors and gave encouraging greeting to the drivers ; many of them ran improvised canteens, which supplied the workers with welcome refreshments during the night.

There was a not unnatural tendency at first on the part of some of the motor-drivers to look upon the event more in the light of a meet of hounds than of the gravest possible business, and to hang about discussing the adventure with the other " sportsmen." But the use of vigorous language brought them back to recognition of the seriousness of the work before them, and the discharge of the cargo proceeded hour after hour with the utmost rapidity and with

the regularity of a well-oiled machine. The cars drew up beside the *Mountjoy* in an endless *queue*; each received its quota of bales according to its carrying capacity, and was despatched on its homeward journey without a moment's delay.

The wisdom of Crawford's system of packing was fully vindicated. There was no confusion, no waiting to bring ammunition from one part of the ship's hold to match with rifles brought from another, and bayonets from a third. The packages, as they were carried from the steamer or the cranes, were counted by checking clerks, and their destination noted as each car received its load. But even the large number of vehicles available would have been insufficient for the purpose on hand if each had been limited to a single load; dumps had therefore been formed at a number of selected places in the surrounding districts, where the arms were temporarily deposited so as to allow the cars to return and perform the same duty several times during the night.

While the *Mountjoy* was discharging the Larne consignment on to the quay, she was at the same time transhipping a smaller quantity into a motor-boat, moored against her side, which when laden hurried off to Donaghadee; and she left Larne at 5 in the morning to discharge the last portion of her cargo at Bangor, which was successfully accomplished in broad daylight after her arrival there about 7.30.

Crawford refused to leave the ship at either Larne or Bangor, feeling himself bound in honour to remain with the crew until they were safe from arrest by the naval authorities. It was well known in Belfast that a look-out was being kept for the *Fanny*, which had figured in the Press as " the mystery ship " ever since the affair at Langeland, and had several times been reported to have been viewed at all sorts of odd places on the map, from the Orkneys to Tory Island. Just as Agnew was casting off from Bangor, when the last bale of arms had gone ashore, a message from U.V.F. headquarters informed him that a thirty-knot cruiser was out looking for the *Fanny*. To mislead the coast-guards on shore a course was immediately

set for the Clyde—the very quarter from which a cruiser coming from Lamlash was to be expected—and when some way out to sea Crawford cut the cords holding the canvas sheets that bore the name of the *Mountjoy*, so that within five minutes the filibustering pirate had again become the staid old collier *Clydevalley*, which for months past had carried her regular weekly cargo of coal from Scotland to Belfast. As before at Langeland, so now at Copeland, fog providentially covered retreat, and through it the *Clydevalley* made her way undetected down the Irish Sea. At daybreak next morning Crawford landed at Rosslare; and Agnew then proceeded along the French and Danish coasts to the Baltic to the rendezvous with the *Fanny*, in order to bring back the Ulstermen members of her crew, after which "the mystery ship" was finally disposed of at Hamburg.

Sir Edward Carson and Lord Londonderry were both in London on the 24th of April. At an early hour next morning a telegram was delivered to each of them, containing the single word "Lion." It was a code message signifying that the landing of the arms had been carried out without a hitch. Before long special editions of the newspapers proclaimed the news to all the world, and as fresh details appeared in every successive issue during the day the public excitement grew in intensity. Wherever two or three Unionists were gathered together exultation was the prevailing mood, and eagerness to send congratulations to friends in Ulster.

Soon after breakfast a visitor to Sir Edward Carson found a motor brougham standing at his door, and on being admitted was told that "Lord Roberts is with Sir Edward." The great little Field-Marshal, on learning the news, had lost not a moment in coming to offer his congratulations to the Ulster leader. "Magnificent!" he exclaimed, on entering the room and holding out his hand, "magnificent! nothing could have been better done; it was a piece of organisation that any army in Europe might be proud of."

But it was not to be expected that the Government and its supporters would relish the news. The Radical Press, of course, rang all the changes of angry vituperation, especially those papers which had been prominent in ridi-

culing " Ulster bluff " and " King Carson's wooden guns " ; and they now speculated as to whether Carson could be " convicted of complicity " in what Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons described as " this grave and unprecedented outrage." Carson soon set that question at rest by quietly rising in his place in the House and saying that he took full responsibility for everything that had been done. The Prime Minister, amid the frenzied cheers of his followers, assured the House that " His Majesty's Government will take, without delay, appropriate steps to vindicate the authority of the law." For a short time there was some curiosity as to what the appropriate steps would be. None, however, of any sort were taken ; the Government contented itself with sending a few destroyers to patrol for a short time the coasts of Antrim and Down, where they were saluted by the Ulster Signalling Stations, and their officers hospitably entertained on shore by loyalist residents.

On the 28th of April a further debate on the Curragh Incident took place in the House of Commons, which was a curious example of the rapid changes of mood that characterise that Assembly. Most of the speeches both from the front and back benches were, if possible, even more bitter, angry, and defiant than usual. But at the close of one of the bitterest of them all Mr. Churchill read a typewritten passage that was recognised as a tiny olive-branch held out to Ulster. Carson responded next day in a conciliatory tone, and the Prime Minister was thought to suggest a renewal of negotiations in private. For some time nothing came of this hint ; but on the 12th of May Mr. Asquith announced that the third reading of the Home Rule Bill (for the third successive year, as required by the Parliament Act before being presented for the signature of the King) would be taken before Whitsuntide, but that the Government intended to make another attempt to appease Ulster by introducing " an amending proposal, in the hope that a settlement by agreement may be arrived at " ; and that the two Bills—the Home Rule Bill and the Bill to amend it—might become law practically at the same time. But he gave no hint as to what the " amending

proposal " was to be, and the reception of the announcement by the Opposition did not seem to presage agreement.

Mr. Bonar Law insisted that the House of Commons ought to be told what the Amending Bill would propose, before it was asked finally to pass the Home Rule Bill. But the real fact was, as every member of the House of Commons fully realised, that Mr. Asquith was not a free agent in this matter. The Nationalists were not at all pleased at the attempts already made, trivial as they were, to satisfy Ulster, and Mr. Redmond protested against the promise of an Amending Bill of any kind. Mr. Asquith could make no proposal sufficient to allay the hostility of Ulster that would not alienate the Nationalists, whose support was essential to the continuance of his Government in office.

On the same day as this debate in Parliament the result of a by-election at Grimsby was announced in which the Unionist candidate retained the seat; a week later the Unionists won a seat in Derbyshire; and two days afterwards crowned these successes with a resounding victory at Ipswich. The last-mentioned contest was considered so important that Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Edward Carson went down to speak the evening before the poll for their respective sides. Mr. Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made his appeal to the cupidity of the constituency, which was informed that it would gain £15,000 a year from his new Budget, in addition to large sums, of which he gave the figure, for old age pensions and under the Government's Health Insurance Act.[1] Sir Edward Carson laid stress on Ulster's determination to resist Home Rule by force. The Unionist candidate won the seat next day in this essentially working-class constituency by a substantial majority, although his Liberal opponent, Mr. Masterman, was a Cabinet Minister trying for the second time to return to Parliament. Out of seven elections since the beginning of the session the Government had lost four.

It happened that the two latest new members took their seats on the 25th of May, on which date the Home Rule Bill was passed by the House of Commons on third reading

[1] *Annual Register*, 1914, p. 110.

for the last time. The occasion was celebrated by the Nationalists, not unnaturally, by a great demonstration of triumph, both in the House itself and outside in Palace Yard. Men on the other side reflected that the tragedy of civil war had been brought one stage nearer.

The reply of Ulster to the passing of the Bill was a series of reviews of the U.V.F. during the Whitsuntide recess. Carson, Londonderry, Craig, and most of the other Ulster members attended these parades, which excited intense enthusiasm through the country, more especially as the arms brought by the *Mountjoy* were now seen for the first time in the hands of the Volunteers. Several battalions were presented with Colours which had been provided by Lady Londonderry, Lady Massereene, Mrs. Craig, and other local ladies, and the ceremony included the dedication of these Colours by the Bishop of Down and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. Many visitors from England witnessed these displays, and among them were several deputations of Liberal and Labour working men, who reported on their return that what they had seen had converted them to sympathy with Ulster.[1]

After the recess the promised Amending Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on the 23rd of June by the Marquis of Crewe, who explained that it embodied Mr. Asquith's proposals of the 9th of March, and that he invited amendments. Lord Lansdowne at once declared that these proposals, which had been rejected as inadequate three months ago, were doubly insufficient now. But the invitation to amend the Bill was accepted, Lord Londonderry asking the pertinent question whether the Government would tell Mr. Redmond that they would insist on acceptance of any amendments made in response to Lord Crewe's invitation—a question to which no answer was forthcoming. Lord Milner, in the course of the debate, said the Bill would have to be entirely remodelled, and he laid stress on the point that if Ulster were coerced to join the rest of Ireland it would make a united Ireland for ever impossible, and that the employment of the Army and Navy for the purpose of coercion would give a shock to the Empire

[1] *Annual Register*, 1914, p. 114.

which it would not long survive; to which Lord Roberts added that such a policy would mean the utter destruction of the Army, as he had warned the Prime Minister before the incident at the Curragh.

On the 8th of July the Bill was amended by substituting the permanent exclusion of the whole province of Ulster—which Mr. Balfour had named "the clean cut"—for the proposed county option with a time limit; and several other alterations of minor importance were also made. The Bill as amended passed the third reading on the 14th, when Lord Lansdowne predicted that, whatever might be the fate of the measure and of the Home Rule Bill which it modified, the one thing certain was that the idea of coercing Ulster was dead.

In Ulster itself, meanwhile, the people were bent on making Lord Lansdowne's certainty doubly sure. Carson went over for the Boyne celebration on the 12th of July. The frequency of his visits did nothing to damp the ardour with which his arrival was always hailed by his followers. The same wonderful scenes, whether at Larne or at the Belfast docks, were repeated time after time without appearing to grow stale by repetition. They gave colour to the Radical jeer at "King Carson," for no royal personage could have been given a more regal reception than was accorded to "Sir Edward" (as everybody affectionately called him in Belfast) half a dozen times within a few months.

This occasion, when he arrived on the 10th by the Liverpool steamer, accompanied by Mr. Walter Long, was no exception. His route had been announced in the Press. Countless Union Jacks were displayed in every village along both shores of the Lough. Every vessel at anchor, including the gigantic White Star Liner *Britannic*, was dressed; every fog-horn bellowed a welcome; the multitude of men at work in the great ship-yards crowded to places commanding a view of the incoming packet, and waved handkerchiefs and raised cheers for Sir Edward; fellow passengers jostled each other to get sight of him as he went down the gangway and to give him a parting cheer from the deck; the dock sheds were packed with people,

many of them bare-headed and bare-footed women, who pressed close in the hope of touching his hand, or hearing one of his kindly and humorous greetings. It was the same in the streets all the way from the docks to the centre of the city, and out through the working-class district of Ballymacarret to the country beyond, and in every hamlet on the road to Newtownards and Mount Stewart—people congregating to give him a cheer as he passed in Lord Londonderry's motor-car, or pausing in their work on the land to wave a greeting from fields bordering the road.

Radical newspapers in England believed—or at any rate tried to make their readers believe—that the "Northcliffe Press," particularly *The Times* and *Daily Mail*, gave an exaggerated account of these extraordinary demonstrations of welcome to Carson, and of the impressiveness of the great meetings which he addressed. But the accounts in Lord Northcliffe's papers did not differ materially from those in other journals like *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Express*, *The Standard*, *The Morning Post*, *The Observer*, *The Scotsman*, and *The Spectator*. There was no exaggeration. The special correspondents gave faithful accounts of what they saw and heard, and no more. Editorial support was a different matter. Lord Northcliffe's papers were unfailing in their support of the Ulster cause, as were many other great British journals; and even when at a later period Lord Northcliffe's attitude on the general question of Irish government underwent a change that was profoundly disappointing to Ulstermen, his papers never countenanced the idea of applying coercion to Ulster. In the years 1911 to 1914 *The Times* remained true to the tradition started by John Walter, who, himself a Liberal, went personally to Belfast in 1886 to inform himself on the question, then for the first time raised by Gladstone; and, having done so, supported the loyalist cause in Ireland till his death. A series of weighty articles in 1913 and 1914 approved and encouraged the resistance threatened by Ulster to Home Rule, and justified the measures taken in preparation for it. Whatever may have been the reason for a different attitude at a later date, Ulster owed a debt of gratitude to *The Times* in those troubled years.

The long-expected crisis appeared to be very close when Carson arrived in Belfast on the 10th of July, 1914. He had come to attend a meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council—sitting for the first time as the Provisional Government. Craig communicated to the Press the previous day the Preamble and some of the articles of the Constitution of the Provisional Government, hitherto kept strictly secret, one article being that the administration would be taken over "in trust for the Constitution of the United Kingdom," and that "upon the restoration of direct Imperial Government, the Provisional Government shall cease to exist."

At this session on the 10th, the proceedings of which were private, Carson explained the extreme gravity of the situation now reached. The Home Rule Bill would become law probably in a few weeks. It was pretty certain that the Nationalists would not permit the Government to accept the Amending Bill in the altered form in which it had left the Upper House. In that case, nothing remained for them in Ulster but to carry out the policy they had resolved upon long ago, and to make good the Covenant. After his forty minutes' speech a quiet and business-like discussion followed. Plenary authority to take any action necessary in emergency was conferred unanimously on the executive. The course to be followed in assuming the administration was explained and agreed to, and when they separated all the members felt that the crisis for which they had been preparing so long had at last come upon them. There was no flinching.

Next day there was a parade of 3,000 U.V.F. at Larne. A distinguished American who was present said after the march past, "You could destroy these Volunteers, but you could not conquer them." Carson spoke with exceptional solemnity to the men, telling them candidly that, "unless something happens the evidence of which is not visible at present," he could discern nothing but darkness ahead, and no hope of peace. He ended by exhorting his followers throughout Ulster to preserve their self-control and to "commit no act against any individual or against any man's property which would sully the great name you have already won."

As usual, his influence was powerful enough to prevent disturbance. The Government had made extensive military preparations to maintain order on the 12th of July; but, as a well-known "character" in Belfast expressed it, "Sir Edward was worth twenty battalions in keeping order." The anniversary was celebrated everywhere by enormous masses of men in a state of tense excitement. Lord Londonderry addressed an immense gathering at Enniskillen; seventy thousand Orangemen marched from Belfast to Drumbeg to hear Carson, who sounded the same warning note as at Larne two days before. But nowhere throughout the Province was a single occurrence reported that called for action by the police.

When the Ulster leaders returned to London on the 14th they were met by reports of differences in the Cabinet over the Amending Bill, which was to be brought before the House of Commons on the following Monday. Nationalist pressure no doubt dictated the deletion of the amendments made by the Peers and the restoration of the Bill to its original shape. A minority of the Cabinet was said to be opposed to this course. Whether that was true or false, the Prime Minister must by this time have realised that he had allowed the country to drift to the brink of civil war, and that some genuine effort must be made to arrive at a peaceable solution.

Accordingly on Monday, the 20th, instead of introducing the Amending Bill, Mr. Asquith announced in the House of Commons that His Majesty the King, "in view of the grave situation which has arisen, has thought it right to summon representatives of parties, both British and Irish, to a conference at Buckingham Palace, with the object of discussing outstanding issues in relation to the problem of Irish Government." The Prime Minister added that at the King's suggestion the Speaker, Mr. James Lowther, would preside over the Conference, which would begin its proceedings the following day.

The Liberals, the British Unionists, the Nationalists, and the Ulstermen were respectively represented at the Buckingham Palace Conference by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law, Mr.

Redmond and Mr. Dillon, Sir Edward Carson and Captain James Craig. The King opened the Conference in person on the 21st with a speech recognising the extreme gravity of the situation, and making an impressive appeal for a peaceful settlement of the question at issue. His Majesty then withdrew. The Conference deliberated for four days, but were unable to agree as to what area in Ulster should be excluded from the jurisdiction of the Parliament in Dublin. On the 24th Mr. Asquith announced the breakdown of the Conference, and said that in consequence the Amending Bill would be introduced in the House of Commons on Thursday, the 30th of July.

Here was the old deadlock. The last glimmer of hope that civil war might be averted seemed to be extinguished. Only ten days had elapsed since Carson had gloomily predicted at Larne that peace was impossible "unless something happens, the evidence of which is not visible at present." But that "something" did happen—though it was something infinitely more dreadful, infinitely more devastating in its consequences, even though less dishonouring to the nation, than the alternative from which it saved us. Balanced, as it seemed, on the brink of civil war, Great Britain and Ireland together toppled over on the other side into the maelstrom of world-wide war.

On the 30th of July, when the Amending Bill was to be discussed, the Prime Minister said that, with the concurrence of Mr. Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson, it would be indefinitely postponed, in order that the country at this grave crisis in the history of the world "should present a united front and be able to speak and act with the authority of an undivided nation." To achieve this, all domestic quarrels must be laid aside, and he promised that "no business of a controversial character" would be undertaken.

Thus it happened that the Amending Bill was never seen by the House of Commons. Four days later the United Kingdom was at war with the greatest military Empire in the world. The opportunity had come for Ulster to prove whether her cherished loyalty was a reality or a sham.

CHAPTER XX

ULSTER IN THE WAR

More than a year before the outbreak of the Great War a writer in *The Morning Post*, describing the Ulster Volunteers who were then beginning to attract attention in England, used language which was more accurately prophetic than he can have realised in May 1913:

"What these men have been preparing for in Ulster," he wrote, "may be of value as a military asset in time of national emergency. I have seen the men at drill, I have seen them on parade, and experts assure me that in the matter of discipline, physique, and all things which go to the making of a military force they are worthy to rank with our regular soldiers. It is an open secret that, once assured of the maintenance unimpaired of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland under the Imperial Parliament alone, a vast proportion of the citizen army of Ulster would cheerfully hold itself at the disposal of the Imperial Government and volunteer for service either at home or abroad!"[1]

The only error in the prediction was that the writer underestimated the sacrifice Ulster would be willing to make for the Empire. When the testing time came fifteen months after this appreciation was published all hope of unimpaired maintenance of the Union had to be sorrowfully given up, and only those who were in a position to comprehend, with sympathy, the depth and intensity of the feeling in Ulster on the subject could realise all that this meant to the people there. Yet, all the same, their "citizen army" did not hesitate to "hold itself at the disposal of the Imperial Government, and volunteer for service at home or abroad."

[1] *Morning Post*, May 19th, 1913.

In August 1914 the U.V.F., of 100,000 men, was without question the most efficient force of infantry in the United Kingdom outside the Regular Army. The medical comb did not seriously thin its ranks; and although the age test considerably reduced its number, it still left a body of fine material for the British Army. Some of the best of its officers, like Captain Arthur O'Neill, M.P., of the Life Guards, and Lord Castlereagh of the Blues, had to leave the U.V.F. to rejoin the regiments to which they belonged, or to take up staff appointments at the front. In spite of such losses there was a strong desire in the force, which was shared by the political leaders, that it should be kept intact as far as possible and form a distinct unit for active service, and efforts were at once made to get the War Office to arrange for this to be done. Pressure of work at the War Office, and Lord Kitchener's aversion from anything that he thought savoured of political considerations in the organisation of the Army, imposed a delay of several weeks before this was satisfactorily arranged; and the consequence was that in the first few weeks of the war a large number of the keenest young men in Ulster enlisted in various regiments before it was known that an Ulster Division was to be formed out of the U.V.F.

It was the beginning of September before Carson was in a position to go to Belfast to announce that such an arrangement had been made with Lord Kitchener. And when he went he had also the painful duty of telling the people of Ulster that the Government was going to give them the meanest recompense for the promptitude with which they had thrown aside all party purposes in order to assist the Empire.

When war broke out a "party truce" had been proclaimed. The Unionist leaders promised their support to the Government in carrying on the war, and Mr. Asquith pledged the Government to drop all controversial legislation. The consideration of the Amending Bill had been shelved by agreement, Mr. Asquith stating that the postponement "must be without prejudice to the domestic and political position of any party." On this understanding the Unionist Party supported, almost without so much as

a word of criticism, all the emergency measures proposed by the Government. Yet on the 10th of August Mr. Asquith astonished the Unionists by announcing that the promise to take no controversial business was not to prevent him advising the King to sign the Home Rule Bill, which had been hung up in the House of Lords by the introduction of the Amending Bill, and had never been either rejected or passed by that House.

Mr. Balfour immediately protested against this conduct as a breach of faith; but Mr. Redmond's speech on that occasion contained the explanation of the Government's conduct. The Nationalist leader gave a strong hint that any help in the war from the southern provinces of Ireland would depend on whether or not the Home Rule Bill was to become law at once. Although the personal loyalty of Mr. Redmond was beyond question, and although he was no doubt sincere when he subsequently denied that his speech was so intended, it was in reality an application of the old maxim that England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity. In any case, the Cabinet knew that, however unjustly Ulster might be treated, she could be relied upon to do everything in her power to further the successful prosecution of the war, and they cynically came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to placate those whose loyalty was less assured.

This was the unpleasant tale that Sir Edward Carson had to unfold to the Ulster Unionist Council on the 3rd of September. After explaining how and why he had consented to the indefinite postponement of the Amending Bill, he continued:

"And so, without any condition of any kind, we agreed that the Bill should be postponed without prejudice to the position of either party. England's difficulty is not Ulster's opportunity. England's difficulty is our difficulty; and England's sorrows have always been, and always will be, our sorrows. I have seen it stated that the Germans thought they had hit on an opportune moment, owing to our domestic difficulties, to make their bullying demand against our country. They little understood for what we were fighting. We were not fighting to get away from

England ; we were fighting to stay with England, and the Power that attempted to lay a hand upon England, whatever might be our domestic quarrels, would at once bring us together—as it has brought us together—as one man."

In order to avoid controversy at such a time, Carson declared he would say nothing about their opponents. He insisted that, however unworthily the Government might act in a great national emergency, Ulstermen must distinguish between the Prime Minister as a party leader and the Prime Minister as the representative of the whole nation. Their duty was to " think not of him or his party, but of our country," and they must show that " we do not seek to purchase terms by selling our patriotism." He then referred to the pride they all felt in the U.V.F. ; how he had " watched them grow from infancy," through self-sacrificing toil to their present high efficiency, with the purpose of " allowing us to be put into no degraded position in the United Kingdom." But under the altered conditions their duty was clear :

" Our country and our Empire are in danger. And under these circumstances, knowing that the very basis of our political faith is our belief in the greatness of the United Kingdom and of the Empire, I say to our Volunteers without hesitation, go and help to save your country. Go and win honour for Ulster and for Ireland. To every man that goes, or has gone, and not to them only, but to every Irishman, you and I say, from the bottom of our hearts, ' God bless you and bring you home safe and victorious.' "

The arrangements with the War Office for forming a Division from the Ulster Volunteers were then explained, which would enable the men " to go as old comrades accustomed to do their military training together." Carson touched lightly on fears that had been expressed lest political advantage should be taken by the Government or by the Nationalists of the conversion of the U.V.F. into a Division of the British Army, which would leave Ulster defenceless. " We are quite strong enough," he said, " to take care of ourselves, and so I say to men, so far as they

have confidence and trust in me, that I advise them to go and do their duty to the country, and we will take care of politics hereafter." He concluded by moving a resolution, which was unanimously carried by the Council, urging "all Loyalists who owe allegiance to our cause" to join the Army at once if qualified for military service.

From beginning to end of this splendidly patriotic oration no allusion was made to the Nationalist attitude to the war. Few people in Ulster had any belief that the spots on the leopard were going to disappear, even when the Home Rule Bill had been placed on the Statute-book. The "difficulty" and the "opportunity" would continue in their old relations. People in Belfast, as elsewhere, did justice to the patriotic tone of Mr. Redmond's speech in the House of Commons on the 3rd of August, which made so deep an impression in England; but they believed him mistaken in attributing to "the democracy of Ireland" a complete change of sentiment towards England, and their scepticism was more than justified by subsequent events.

But they also scrutinised more carefully than Englishmen the precise words used by the Nationalist leader. Englishmen, both in the House of Commons and in the country, were carried off their feet in an ecstasy of joy and wonder at Mr. Redmond's confident offer of loyal help from Ireland to the Empire in the mighty world conflict. Ireland was to be "the one bright spot." Ulstermen, on the other hand, did not fail to observe that the offer was limited to service at home. "I say to the Government," said Mr. Redmond, "that they may to-morrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. I say that the coast of Ireland will be defended from foreign invasion by her armed sons, and for this purpose armed Nationalist Catholics in the South will be only too glad to join arms with the armed Protestant Ulstermen in the North."

These sentences were rapturously applauded in the House of Commons. When they were read in Ulster the shrewd men of the North asked what danger threatened the "coast of Ireland"; and whether, supposing there were a danger, the British Navy would not be a surer defence than the "armed sons" of Ireland whether from South or North.

It was not on the coast of Ireland but the coast of Flanders that men were needed, and it was thither that the " armed Protestant Ulstermen " were preparing to go in thousands. They would not be behind the Catholics of the South in the spirit of comradeship invoked by Mr. Redmond if they were to stand shoulder to shoulder under the fire of Prussian batteries ; but they could not wax enthusiastic over the suggestion that, while they went to France, Mr. Redmond's Nationalist Volunteers should be trained and armed by the Government to defend the Irish coast—and possibly, later, to impose their will upon Ulster.

The organisation and the training of the Ulster Division forms no part of the present narrative, but it must be stated that after Carson's speech on the 3rd of September, recruiting went on uninterruptedly and rapidly, and the whole energies of the local leaders and of the rank and file were thrown into the work of preparation. Captain James Craig, promoted to be Lieutenant-Colonel, was appointed Q.M.G. of the Division ; but the arduous duties of this post, in which he tried to do the work of half a dozen men, brought about a complete breakdown of health some months later, with the result that, to his deep disappointment, he was forbidden to go with the Division to France. No one displayed a finer spirit than his brother, Mr. Charles Craig, M.P. for South Antrim. He had never done any soldiering, as his brother had in South Africa, and he was over military age in 1914 ; but he did not allow either his age, his military inexperience, or his membership of the House of Commons to serve as excuse for separating himself from the men with whom he had learnt the elements of drill in the U.V.F. He obtained a commission as Captain in the Ulster Division, and went with it to France, where he was wounded and taken prisoner in the great engagement at Thiepval in the battle of the Somme, and had to endure all the rigours of captivity in Germany till the end of the war. There was afterwards not a little pungent comment among his friends on the fact that, when honours were descending in showers on the heads of the just and the unjust alike, a full share of which reached members of Parliament, sometimes for no very conspicuous merit, no

recognition of any kind was awarded to this gallant Ulster officer, who had set so fine an example and unostentatiously done so much more than his duty.

The Government's act of treachery in regard to "controversial business" was consummated on the 18th of September, when the Home Rule Bill received the Royal Assent. On the 15th Mr. Asquith put forward his defence in the House of Commons. In a sentence of mellifluous optimism that was to be woefully falsified in a not-distant future, he declared his confidence that the action his Ministry was taking would bring "for the first time for a hundred years Irish opinion, Irish sentiment, Irish loyalty, flowing with a strong and a continuous and ever-increasing stream into the great reservoir of Imperial resources and Imperial unity." He acknowledged, however, that the Government had pledged itself not to put the Home Rule Bill on the Statute-book until the Amending Bill had been disposed of. That promise was not now to be kept; instead he gave another, which, when the time came, was equally violated, namely, to introduce the Amending Bill "in the next session of Parliament, before the Irish Government Bill can possibly come into operation." Meantime, there was to be a Suspensory Bill to provide that the Home Rule Bill should remain in abeyance till the end of the war, and he gave an assurance "which would be in spirit and in substance completely fulfilled, that the Home Rule Bill will not and cannot come into operation until Parliament has had the fullest opportunity, by an Amending Bill, of altering, modifying, or qualifying its provisions in such a way as to secure the general consent both of Ireland and of the United Kingdom." The Prime Minister, further, paid a tribute to "the patriotic and public spirit which had been shown by the Ulster Volunteers," whose conduct has made "the employment of force, any kind of force, for what you call the coercion of Ulster, an absolutely unthinkable thing."

But a verbal acknowledgment of the public spirit shown by the U.V.F. in the first month of the war was a paltry recompense for the Government's breach of faith, as Mr. Bonar Law immediately pointed out in a stinging rejoinder.

The leader of the Opposition concluded his powerful indictment by saying that such conduct by the Government could not be allowed to pass without protest, but that at such a moment of national danger debate in Parliament on this domestic quarrel, forced upon them by Ministers, was indecent; and that, having made his protest, neither he nor his party would take further part in that indecency. Thereupon the whole Unionist Party followed Mr. Bonar Law out of the Chamber.

But that was not the end of the incident. It had been decided, with Sir Edward Carson's approval, that "Ulster Day," the second anniversary of the Covenant, should be celebrated in Ulster by special religious services. The intention had been to focus attention on the larger aspects of Imperial instead of local patriotism; but what had just occurred in Parliament could not be ignored, and it necessitated a reaffirmation of Ulster's unchanged attitude in the domestic quarrel. Mr. Bonar Law now determined to accompany Sir Edward Carson to Belfast to renew and to amplify under these circumstances the pledges of British Unionists to Ulster.

The occasion was a memorable one in several respects. On the 17th of September Sir Edward Carson had been quietly married in the country to Miss Frewen, and he was accompanied to Belfast a few days later by the new Lady Carson, who then made acquaintance with Ulster and her husband's followers for the first time. The scenes that invariably marked the leader's arrival from England have been already described; but the presence of his wife led to a more exuberant welcome than ever on this occasion; and the recent Parliamentary storm, with its sequel in the visit of the leader of the Unionist Party, contributed further to the unbounded enthusiasm of the populace.

There was a meeting of the Council on the morning of the 28th, Ulster Day, at which Carson told the whole story of the conferences, negotiations, conversations, and what not, that had been going on up to, and even since, the outbreak of war, in the course of which he observed that, if he had committed any fault, "it was that he believed the Prime Minister." He paid a just tribute to Mr. Bonar Law,

whose constancy, patience, and " resolution to be no party even under these difficult circumstances to anything that would be throwing over Ulster, were matters which would be photographed upon his mind to the very end of his life."

But while, naturally, resentment at the conduct of the Government found forcible expression, and the policy that would be pursued " after the war " was outlined, the keynote of the speeches at this Council Meeting, and also at the overwhelming demonstration addressed by Mr. Bonar Law in the Ulster Hall in the evening, was " country before party." As the Unionist leader truly said: " This is not an anti-Home Rule meeting. That can wait, and you are strong enough to let it wait with quiet confidence." But before passing to the great issues raised by the war, introduced by a telling allusion to the idea that Germany had calculated on Ulster being a thorn in England's side, Mr. Bonar Law gave the message to Ulster which he had specially crossed the Channel to deliver in person.

He reminded the audience that hitherto the promise of support to Ulster by the Unionists of Great Britain, given long before at Blenheim, had been coupled with the condition that, if an appeal were made to the electorate, the Unionist Party would bow to the verdict of the country. " But now," he went on, " after the way in which advantage has been taken of your patriotism, I say to you, and I say it with the full authority of our party, we give the pledge without any condition."

During the two days which he spent in Belfast Mr. Bonar Law, and other visitors from England, paid visits to the training camps at Newcastle and Ballykinler, where the 1st Brigade of the Ulster Division was undergoing training for the front. Both now, and for some time to come, there was a good deal of unworthy political jealousy of the Division, which showed itself in a tendency to belittle the recruiting figures from Ulster, and in sneers in the Nationalist Press at the delay in sending to the front a body of troops whose friends had advertised their supposed efficiency before the war. These troops were themselves fretting to get to France; and they believed, rightly or

wrongly, that political intrigue was at work to keep them ingloriously at home, while other Divisions, lacking their preliminary training, were receiving preference in the supply of equipment.

One small circumstance, arising out of the conditions in which "Kitchener's Army" had to be raised, afforded genuine enjoyment in Ulster. Men were enlisting far more rapidly than the factories could provide arms, uniforms, and other equipment. Rifles for teaching the recruits to drill and manœuvre were a long way short of requirements. It was a great joy to the Ulstermen when the War Office borrowed their much-ridiculed "dummy rifles" and "wooden guns," and took them to English training camps for use by the "New Army."

But this volume is not concerned with the conduct of the Great War, nor is it necessary to enter in detail into the controversy that arose as to the efforts of the rest of Ireland, in comparison with those of Ulster, to serve the Empire in the hour of need. It will be sufficient to cite the testimony of two authorities, neither of whom can be suspected of bias on the side of Ulster. The chronicler of the *Annual Register* records that:

"In Ulster, as in England, the flow of recruits outran the provision made for them by the War Office, and by about the middle of October the Protestant districts had furnished some 21,000, of which Belfast alone had contributed 7,581, or 305 per 10,000 of the population—the highest proportion of all the towns in the United Kingdom." [1]

The second witness is the democratic orator who took a foremost part in the House of Commons in denouncing the Curragh officers who resigned their Commissions rather than march against Ulster. Colonel John Ward, M.P., writing two years after the war, in which he had not kept his eyes shut, said:

"It would be presumptuous for a mere Englishman to praise the gallantry and patriotism of Scotland, Wales, and Ulster; their record stands second to none in the annals of the war. The case of the South of Ireland, her most

[1] *The Annual Register*, 1914, p. 259.

ardent admirer will admit, is not as any other in the whole British Empire. To the everlasting credit of the great leader of the Irish Nationalists, Mr. John Redmond, his gallant son, and his very lovable brother—together with many real, great-souled Irish soldiers whose loss we so deeply deplore—saw the light and followed the only course open to good men and true. But the patriotism and devotion of the few only show up in greater and more exaggerated contrast the sullen indifference of the majority, and the active hostility of the minority, who would have seen our country and its people overrun and defeated not only without regret, but with fiendish delight." [1]

No generous-minded Ulsterman would wish to detract a word from the tribute paid by Colonel Ward to the Redmond family and other gallant Catholic Nationalists who stood manfully for the Empire in the day of trial; but the concluding sentence in the above quotation cannot be gainsaid. And the pathetic thing was that Mr. Redmond himself never seems to have understood the true sentiments of the majority of those who had been his followers before the war. In a speech in the House on the 15th of September he referred contemptuously to a "little group of men who never belonged to the National Constitutional party, who were circulating anti-recruiting handbills and were publishing little wretched rags once a week or once a month," which were not worth a moment's notice.

The near future was to show that these adherents of Sinn Fein were not so negligible as Mr. Redmond sincerely believed. The real fact was that his own patriotic attitude at the outbreak of war undermined his leadership in Ireland. The "separatism" which had always been, as Ulster never ceased to believe, the true underlying, though not always the acknowledged, motive power of Irish Nationalism, was beginning again to assert itself, and to find expression in "handbills" and "wretched rags." It was discovering other leaders and spokesmen than Mr. Redmond and his party, whom it was destined before long to sweep utterly away.

[1] "The Army and Ireland," *Nineteenth Century and After*, January 1921, by Lieut.-Colonel John Ward, C.B., C.M.G., M.P.

CHAPTER XXI

NEGOTIATIONS FOR SETTLEMENT

THE position in which Ulster was now placed was, from the political point of view, a very anxious one. Had the war not broken out when it did, there was a very prevalent belief that the Government could not have avoided a general election either before, or immediately after, the placing of Home Rule on the Statute-book; and as to the result of such an election no Unionist had any misgiving. Even if the Government had remained content to disregard the electorate, it would have been impossible for them to subject Ulster to a Dublin Parliament. The organisation there was powerful enough to prevent it, by force if necessary, and the Curragh Incident had proved that the Army could not be employed against the Loyalists.

But the whole outlook had now changed. The war had put off all thought of a General Election till an indefinite future; the Ulster Volunteers, and every other wheel in the very effective machinery prepared for resistance to Home Rule, were now diverted to a wholly different purpose; and at the same time the hated Bill had become an Act, and the only alleviation was the promise, for what it might be worth, of an Amending Bill the scope of which remained undefined. While, therefore, the Ulster leaders and people threw themselves with all their energy into the patriotic work to which the war gave the call, the situation so created at home caused them much uneasiness.

No one felt it more than Lord Londonderry. Indeed, as the autumn of 1914 wore on, the despondency he fell into was so marked that his friends could not avoid disquietude on his personal account in addition to all the other grounds for anxiety. He and Lady Londonderry, it is true, took a leading part in all the activities to which the war gave rise

—encouraging recruiting, organising hospitals, and making provision of every kind for soldiers and their dependents, in Ulster and in the County of Durham. But when in London in November, Lord Londonderry would sit moodily at the Carlton Club, speaking to few except intimate friends, and apparently overcome by depression. He was pessimistic about the war. His only son was at the front, and he seemed persuaded he would never return. The affairs of Ulster, to which he had given his whole heart, looked black; and he went about as if all his purpose in life was gone. He went with Lady Londonderry to Mount Stewart for Christmas, and one or two intimate friends who visited him there in January 1915 were greatly disturbed in mind on his account. But the public in Belfast, who saw him going in and out of the Ulster Club as usual, did not know anything was amiss, and were terribly shocked as well as grieved when they heard of his sudden death at Wynyard on the 8th of February.

The death of Lord Londonderry was felt by many thousands in Ulster as a personal bereavement. If he did not arouse the unbounded, and almost delirious, devotion which none but Sir Edward Carson ever evoked in the North of Ireland, the deep respect and warm affection felt towards him by all who knew him, and by great numbers who did not, was a tribute which his modesty and integrity of character and genial friendliness of disposition richly deserved. He was faithfully described by Carson himself to the Ulster Unionist Council several months after his death as "a great leader, a great and devoted public servant, a great patriot, a great gentleman, and above all the greatest of great friends."

Ulster, meantime, had already had a foretaste of the sacrifices the war was to demand when the Division should go to the front. In November 1914 Captain the Hon. Arthur O'Neill, M.P. for Mid Antrim, who had gone to the front with the first expeditionary force, was killed in action in France. There was a certain sense of sad pride in the reflection that the first member of the House of Commons to give his life for King and country was a representative of Ulster; and the constituency which suffered the loss of

a promising young member by the death of this gallant Life Guardsman consoled itself by electing in his place his younger brother, Major Hugh O'Neill, then serving in the Ulster Division, who afterwards proved himself a most valuable member of the Ulster Parliamentary Party, and eventually became the first Speaker of the Ulster Parliament created by the Act of 1920.

Notwithstanding the bitter outbreak of party passion caused by the Government's action in putting the Home Rule Bill on the Statute-book in September, the party truce was well maintained throughout the autumn and winter. And the most striking proof of the transformation wrought by the war was seen when Mr. Asquith, when constrained to form a truly national Administration in May 1915, included Sir Edward Carson in his Cabinet with the office of Attorney-General. Mr. Redmond was at the same time invited to join the Government, and his refusal to do so when the British Unionists, the Labour leaders, and the Ulster leaders all responded to the Prime Minister's appeal to their patriotism, did not appear in the eyes of Ulstermen to confirm the Nationalist leader's profession of loyalty to the Empire; though they did him the justice of believing that he would have accepted office if he had felt free to follow his own inclination. His inability to do so, and the complaints of his followers, including Mr. Dillon, at the admission of Carson to the Cabinet, revealed the incapacity of the Nationalists to rise to a level above party.

Carson, however, did not remain very long in the Government. Disapproving of the policy pursued in relation to our Allies in the Balkans, he resigned on the 20th of October, 1915. But he had remained long enough to prove his value in council to the most energetic of his colleagues in the Cabinet. Men like Mr. Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George, although they had been the bitterest of Carson's opponents eighteen months previously, seldom omitted from this time forward to seek his advice in times of difficulty; and the latter of these two, when things were going badly with the Allies more than a year later, endeavoured to persuade Mr. Asquith to include Carson in a Committee of four to be charged with the entire conduct of the war.

It was, perhaps, fortunate that the Ulster leader was not a member of the Government when the rebellion broke out in the South of Ireland at Easter 1916. For this event suddenly brought to the front again the whole Home Rule question, which everybody had hoped might be allowed to sleep till the end of the war; and it would have been a misfortune if Carson had not then been in a position of independence to play his part in this new act of the Irish drama.

The Government had many warnings of what was brewing. But Mr. Birrell, the Chief Secretary, who in frivolity seemed a contemporary embodiment of Nero, deemed cheap wit a sufficient reply to all remonstrances, and had to confess afterwards that he had utterly miscalculated the forces with which he had to deal. He was completely taken by surprise when, on the 20th of April, an attempt to land weapons from a German vessel, escorted by a submarine from which Sir Roger Casement landed in the West of Ireland, proved that the Irish rebels were in league with the enemy; and even after this ominous event, he did nothing to provide against the outbreak that occurred in Dublin four days later. The rising in the capital, and in several other places in the South of Ireland, was not got under for a week, during which time more than 170 houses had been burnt, £2,000,000 sterling worth of property destroyed or damaged, and 1,315 casualties had been suffered, of which 304 were fatal.

The aims of the insurgents were disclosed in a proclamation which referred to the administration in Ireland as a "long usurpation by a foreign people and government." It declared that the Irish Republican Brotherhood—the same organisation that planned and carried out the Phœnix Park murders in 1882—had now seized the right moment for "reviving the old traditions of Irish nationhood," and announced that the new Irish Republic was a sovereign independent State, which was entitled to claim the allegiance of every Irish man and woman.

The rebellion was the subject of debates in both Houses of Parliament on the 10th and 11th of May—Mr. Birrell having in the interval, to use a phrase of Carlyle's, "taken

himself and his incompetence elsewhere"—when Mr. Dillon, speaking for the Nationalist Party, poured forth a flood of passionate sympathy with the rebels, declaring that he was proud of youths who could boast of having slaughtered British soldiers, and he denounced the Government for suppressing the rising in "a sea of blood." The actual fact was, that out of a large number of prisoners taken red-handed in the act of armed rebellion who were condemned to death after trial by court-martial, the great majority were reprieved, and thirteen in all were executed. Whether such measures deserved the frightful description coined by Mr. Dillon's flamboyant rhetoric everybody can judge for himself, after considering whether in any other country or at any other period of the world's history, active assistance of a foreign enemy—for that is what it amounted to—has been visited with a more lenient retribution.

On the same day that Mr. Dillon thus justified the whole basis of Ulster's unchanging attitude towards Nationalism by blurting out his sympathy with England's enemies, Mr. Asquith announced that he was himself going to Ireland to investigate matters on the spot. These two events, Mr. Dillon's speech and the Prime Minister's visit to Dublin—where he certainly exhibited no stern anger against the rebels, even if the stories were exaggerated which reported him to have shown them ostentatious friendliness—went far to transform what had been a wretched fiasco into a success. Cowed at first by their complete failure, the rebels found encouragement in the complacency of the Prime Minister, and the fear or sympathy, whichever it was, of the Nationalist Party. From that moment they rapidly increased in influence, until they proved two years later that they had become the predominant power all over Ireland except in Ulster.

In Ulster the rebellion was regarded with mixed feelings. The strongest sentiment was one of horror at the treacherous blow dealt to the Empire while engaged in a life-and-death struggle with a foreign enemy. But, was it unpardonably Pharisaic if there was also some self-glorification in the thought that Ulstermen in this respect were not as other

men were ? There was also a prevalent feeling that after what had occurred they would hear no more of Home Rule, at any rate during the war. It appeared inconceivable that any sane Government could think of handing over the control of Ireland in time of war to people who had just proved their active hostility to Great Britain in so unmistakable a fashion.

But they were soon undeceived. Mr. Asquith, on his return, told the House of Commons what he had learnt during his few days' sojourn in Ireland. His first proposition was that the existing machinery of Government in Ireland had completely broken down. That was undeniable. It was the natural fruit of the Birrell regime. Mr. Asquith was himself responsible for it. But no more strange or illogical conclusion could be drawn from it than that which Mr. Asquith proceeded to propound. This was that there was now "a unique opportunity for a new departure for the settlement of outstanding problems"—which, when translated from Asquithian into plain English, meant that now was the time for Home Rule. The pledge to postpone the question till after the war was to be swept aside, and, instead of building up by sound and sensible administration what Mr. Birrell's abnegation of government had allowed to crumble into "breakdown," the rebels were to be rewarded for traffic with the enemy and destruction of the central parts of Dublin, with great loss of life, by being allowed to point to the triumphant success of their activity, which was certain to prove the most effective of all possible propaganda for their political ideals in Ireland.

Some regard, however, was still to be paid to the promise of an Amending Bill. The Prime Minister repeated that no one contemplated the coercion of Ulster; that an attempt must be made to come to agreement about the terms on which the Home Rule Act could be brought into immediate operation; and that the Cabinet had deputed to Mr. Lloyd George the task of negotiating to this end with both parties in Ireland. Accordingly, Mr. Lloyd George, then Secretary of State for War, interviewed Sir Edward Carson on the one hand and Mr. Redmond and Mr. Devlin on the

other, and submitted to them separately the proposals which he said the Cabinet were prepared to make.[1]

On the 6th of June Carson explained the Cabinet's proposals at a special meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council held in private. His task was an extremely difficult one, for the advice he had to offer was utterly detestable to himself, and he knew it would be no less so to his hearers. And the latter, profound as was their trust in him as their leader, were men of singularly independent judgment and quite capable of respectfully declining to take any course they did not themselves approve. Indeed, Carson emphasised the fact that he could not, and had not attempted to, bind the Council to take the same view of the situation as himself. At the same time he clearly and frankly stated what his own opinion was, saying: "I would indeed be a poor leader of a great movement if I hesitated to express my own views of any proposition put before you."[2]

His speech, which took nearly two hours in delivery, was a perfect model of lucid exposition and convincing argument. He reviewed in close detail the course of events that had led to the present situation. He maintained from first to last the highest ground of patriotism. Mentioning that numerous correspondents had asked why he did not challenge the Nationalist professions of loyalty two years before at the beginning of the war, which had since then been so signally falsified, he answered:

"Because I had no desire to show a dissentient Ireland to the Germans. I am glad, even with what has happened, that we played the game, and if we had to do it again we would play the game. And then suddenly came the rebellion in Dublin. I cannot find words to describe my own horror when I heard of it. For I am bound to admit to you that I was not thinking merely of Ulster; I was thinking of the war; I was thinking, as I am always thinking, of what will happen if we are beaten in the war. I was

[1] Mr. Lloyd George's memory was at fault when he said in the House of Commons on the 7th of February, 1922, that on the occasion referred to in the text he had seen Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Redmond together.

[2] The quotations from this speech, which was never published, are from a report privately taken by the Ulster Unionist Council.

thinking of the sacrifice of human lives at the front, and in Gallipoli, and at Kut, when suddenly I heard that the whole thing was interrupted by, forsooth, an Irish rebellion—by what Mr. Dillon in the House of Commons called a clean fight! It is not Ulster or Ireland that is now at stake: it is the British Empire. We have therefore to consider not merely a local problem, but a great Imperial problem—how to win the war."

He then outlined the representations that had been made to him by the Cabinet as to the injury to the Allied cause resulting from the unsettled Irish question—the disturbance of good relations with the United States, whence we were obtaining vast quantities of munitions; the bad effect of our local differences on opinion in Allied and neutral countries. He admitted that these evil effects were largely due to false and hostile propaganda to which the British Government weakly neglected to provide an antidote; he believed they were grossly exaggerated. But in time of war they could not contend with their own Government nor be deaf to its appeals, especially when that Government contained all their own party leaders, on whose support they had hitherto leaned.

One of Carson's chief difficulties was to make men grasp the significance of the fact that Home Rule was now actually established by Act of Parliament. The point that the Act was on the Statute-book was constantly lost sight of, with all that it implied. He drove home the unwelcome truth that simple repeal of that Act was not practical politics. The only hope for Ulster to escape going under a Parliament in Dublin lay in the promised Amending Bill. But they had no assurance how much that Bill, when produced, would do for them. Was it likely, he asked, to do more than was now offered by the Government?

He then told the Council what Mr. Lloyd George's proposals were. The Cabinet offered on the one hand a "clean cut," not indeed of the whole of Ulster, but of the six most Protestant counties, and on the other to bring the Home Rule Act, so modified, into immediate operation. He pointed out that none of them could contemplate using the U.V.F. for fighting purposes at home after the war; and

that, even if such a thing were thinkable, they could not expect to get more by forcible resistance to the Act than what was now offered by legislation.

But to Carson himself, and to all who listened to him that day, the heartrending question was whether they could suffer a separation to be made between the Loyalists in the six counties and those in the other three counties of the Province. It could only be done, Carson declared, if, after considering all the circumstances of the case as he unfolded it to them, the delegates from Cavan, Monaghan, and Donegal could make the self-sacrifice of releasing the other counties from the obligation to stand or fall together. Carson ended by saying that he did not intend to take a vote—he " could be no party to having Ulstermen vote one against the other." What was to be done must be done by agreement, or not at all. He offered to confer separately with the delegates from the three omitted counties, and the Council adjourned till the 12th of June to enable this conference to be held.

In the interval a large number of the delegates held meetings of their local associations, most of which passed resolutions in favour of accepting the Government's proposals. But there was undoubtedly a widespread feeling that it would be a betrayal of the Loyalists of Cavan, Monaghan, and Donegal, and even a positive breach of the Covenant, to accept exclusion from the Home Rule Act for only a portion of Ulster. This was, it is true, a misunderstanding of the strict meaning of the Covenant, which had been expressly conditioned so as not to extend to such unforeseen circumstances as the war had brought about [1]; but there was a general desire to avoid if possible taking technical points, and both Carson himself and the Council were ready to sacrifice the opportunity for a tolerable settlement should the representatives of the three counties not freely consent to what was proposed.

In a spirit of self-sacrifice which deeply touched every member of the Council, this consent was given. Carson had obtained leave for Lord Farnham to return from the Army in France to be present at the meeting. Lord

[1] See *ante*, p. 105.

Farnham, as a delegate from Cavan, made a speech at the adjourned meeting on the 12th which filled his hearers with admiration. That he was almost heart-broken by the turn events had taken he made no attempt to conceal; and his distress was shared by those who heard his moving words. But he showed that he possessed the instinct of statesmanship which compelled him to recognise, in spite of the powerful pull of sentiment and self-interest in the opposite direction, that the course recommended by Carson was the path of wisdom. With breaking voice he thanked the latter "for the clearness, and the fairness, and the manliness with which he has put the deplorable situation that has arisen before us, and for his manly advice as leader"; and he then read a resolution that had been passed earlier in the day by the delegates of the three counties, which, after recording a protest against any settlement excluding them from Ulster, expressed sorrowful acquiescence, on grounds of the larger patriotism, in whatever decision might be come to in the matter by their colleagues from the six counties.

It was the saddest hour the Ulster Unionist Council ever spent. Men not prone to emotion shed tears. It was the most poignant ordeal the Ulster leader ever passed through. But it was just one of those occasions when far-seeing statesmanship demands the ruthless silencing of promptings that spring from emotion. Many of those who on that terrible 12th of June were most torn by doubt as to the necessity for the decision arrived at, realised before long that their leader had never been guided by surer insight than in the counsel he gave them that day.

The Resolution adopted by the Council was a lengthy one. After reciting the unaltered attachment of Ulster to the Union, it placed on record the appeal that had been made by the Government on patriotic grounds for a settlement of the Irish difficulty, which the Council did not think it right at such a time of national emergency to resist; but it was careful to reserve, in case the negotiations should break down from any other cause, complete freedom to revert to "opposition to the whole policy of Home Rule for Ireland."

Meantime the Nationalist leaders had been submitting Mr. Lloyd George's proposals to their own people, and on the 10th of June Mr. Redmond made a speech in Dublin from which it appeared that he was submitting a very different proposal to that explained by Carson in Belfast. For Mr. Redmond told his Dublin audience that, while the Home Rule Act was to come into operation at once, the exclusion of the six counties was to be only for the period of the war and twelve months afterwards. That would, of course, have been even less favourable to Ulster than the terms offered by Mr. Asquith and rejected by Carson in March 1914. Exclusion for the period of the war meant nothing; it would have been useless to Ulster; it was no concession whatever; and Carson would have refused, as he did in 1914, even to submit it to the Unionist Council in Belfast. Mr. Lloyd George, who must have known this, had told him quite clearly that there was to be a "definite clean cut," with no suggestion of a time limit. There was, however, an idea that after the war an Imperial Conference would be held, at which the whole constitutional relations of the component nations of the British Empire would be reviewed, and that the permanent status of Ireland would then come under reconsideration with the rest. In this sense the arrangement now proposed was spoken of as "provisional"; but both Mr. Lloyd George and the Prime Minister made it perfectly plain that the proposed exclusion of the six Ulster counties from Home Rule could never be reversed except by a fresh Act of Parliament.

But when the question was raised by Mr. Redmond in the House of Commons on the 24th of July, in a speech of marked moderation, he explained that he had understood the exclusion, like all the rest of the scheme, to be strictly "provisional," with the consequence that it would come to an end automatically at the end of the specified period unless prolonged by new legislation; and he refused to respond to an earnest appeal by Mr. Asquith not to let slip this opportunity of obtaining, with the consent of the Unionist Party, immediate Home Rule for the greater part of Ireland, more especially as Mr. Redmond himself

had disclaimed any desire to bring Ulster within the Home Rule jurisdiction without her own consent.

The negotiations for settlement thus fell to the ground, and the bitter sacrifice which Ulster had brought herself to offer, in response to the Government's urgent appeal, bore no fruit, unless it was to afford one more proof of her loyalty to England and the Empire. She was to find that such proofs were for the most part thrown away, and merely were used by her enemies, and by some who professed to be her friends, as a starting-point for demands on her for further concessions. But, although all British parties in turn did their best to impress upon Ulster that loyalty did not pay, she never succeeded in learning the lesson sufficiently to be guided by it in her political conduct.

CHAPTER XXII

THE IRISH CONVENTION

After the failure of Mr. Lloyd George's negotiations for settlement in the summer of 1916 the Nationalists practically dropped all pretence of helping the Government to carry on the war. They were, no doubt, beginning to realise how completely they were losing hold of the people of Southern Ireland, and that the only chance of regaining their vanishing popularity was by an attitude of hostility to the British Government.

Frequently during the autumn and winter they raised debates in Parliament on the demand that the Home Rule Act should immediately come into operation, and threatened that if this were not done recruits from Ireland would not be forthcoming, although the need for men was now a matter of great national urgency. They ignored the fact that Mr. Redmond was a consenting party to Mr. Asquith's policy of holding Home Rule in abeyance till after the war, and attempted to explain away their own loss of influence in Ireland by alleging that the exasperation of the Irish people at the delay in obtaining "self-government" was the cause of their alienation from England, and of the growth of Sinn Fein.

In December 1916 the Asquith Government came to an end, and Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister. He had shown his estimate of Sir Edward Carson's statesmanship by pressing Mr. Asquith to entrust the entire conduct of the war to a Committee of four, of whom the Ulster leader should be one; and, having failed in this attempt to infuse energy and decision into the counsels of his Chief, he turned him out and formed a Ministry with Carson in the office of First Lord of the Admiralty, at that time one of the most vital in the Government. Colonel James

Craig also joined the Ministry as Treasurer of the Household.

The change of Government did nothing to alter the attitude of the Nationalists, unless, indeed, the return of Carson to high office added to the fierceness of their attacks. On the 26th of February 1917—just when "unrestricted submarine warfare" was bringing the country into its greatest peril—Mr. Dillon called upon the Government to release twenty-eight men who had been deported from Ireland, and who were declared by Mr. Duke, the Chief Secretary, to have been deeply implicated in the Easter rebellion of the previous year; and a week later Mr. T. P. O'Connor returned to the charge with another demand for Home Rule without further ado.

The debate on Mr. O'Connor's motion on the 7th of March was made memorable by the speech of Major William Redmond, home on leave from the trenches in France, whose sincere and impassioned appeal for oblivion of old historic quarrels between Irish Catholics and Protestants, who were at that moment fighting and dying side by side in France, made a deep impression on the House of Commons and the country. And when this gallant officer fell in action not long afterwards and was carried out of the firing line by Ulster soldiers, his speech on the 7th of March was recalled and made the peg on which to hang many adjurations to Ulster to come into line with their Nationalist fellow-countrymen of the South.

Such appeals revealed a curious inability to grasp the realities of the situation. Men spoke and wrote as if it were something new and wonderful for Irishmen of the "two nations" to be found fighting side by side in the British Army—as if the same thing had not been seen in the Peninsula, in the Crimea, on the Indian frontier, in South Africa, and in many another fight. Ulstermen, like everybody else who knew Major Redmond, deplored the loss of a very gallant officer and a very lovable man. But they could not understand why his death should be made a reason for a change in their political convictions. When Major Arthur O'Neill, an Ulster member, was killed in action in 1914, no one had suggested that Nationalists

should on that account turn Unionists. Why, they wondered, should Unionists any more turn Nationalists because a Nationalist M.P. had made the same supreme sacrifice? All this sentimental talk of that time was founded on the misconception that Ulster's attachment to the Union was the result of personal prejudice against Catholics of the South, instead of being, as it was, a deliberate and reasoned conviction as to the best government for Ireland.

This distinction was clearly brought out in the same debate by Sir John Lonsdale, who, when Carson became a member of the Cabinet, had been elected leader of the Ulster Party in the House of Commons; and an emphatic pronouncement, which went to the root of the controversy, was made in reply to the Nationalists by the Prime Minister. In the north-eastern portion of Ireland, he said:

"You have a population as hostile to Irish rule as the rest of Ireland is to British rule, yea, and as ready to rebel against it as the rest of Ireland is against British rule—as alien in blood, in religious faith, in traditions, in outlook—as alien from the rest of Ireland in this respect as the inhabitants of Fife or Aberdeen. To place them under National rule against their will would be as glaring an outrage on the principles of liberty and self-government as the denial of self-government would be for the rest of Ireland."

The Government were, therefore, prepared, said Mr. Lloyd George, to bring in Home Rule immediately for that part of Ireland that wanted it, but not for the Northern part which did not want it. Mr. Redmond made a fine display of indignation at this refusal to coerce Ulster; and, in imitation of the Unionists in 1914, marched out of the House at the head of his party. Next day he issued a manifesto to men of Irish blood in the United States and in the Dominions, calling on them to use all means in their power to exert pressure on the British Government. It was clear that this sort of thing could not be tolerated in the middle of a war in which Great Britain was fighting for her life, and at a crisis in it when her fortunes were far from prosperous. Accordingly, on the 16th of March Mr. Bonar

Law warned the Nationalists that their conduct might make it necessary to appeal to the country on the ground that they were obstructing the prosecution of the war. But he also announced that the Cabinet intended to make one more attempt to arrive at a settlement of the apparently insoluble problem of Irish government.

Two months passed before it was made known how this attempt was to be made. On the 16th of May the Prime Minister addressed a letter in duplicate to Mr. Redmond and Sir John Lonsdale, representing the two Irish parties respectively, in which he put forward for their consideration two alternative methods of procedure, after premising that the Government felt precluded from proposing during the war any measures except such as " would be substantially accepted by both sides."

These alternatives were : (*a*) a " Bill for the immediate application of the Home Rule Act to Ireland, but excluding therefrom the six counties of North-East Ulster," or, (*b*) a Convention of Irishmen " for the purpose of drafting a Constitution . . . which should secure a just balance of all the opposing interests." Sir John Lonsdale replied to the Prime Minister that he would take the Government's first proposal to Belfast for consideration by the Council ; but as Mr. Redmond, on the other hand, peremptorily refused to have anything to say to it, it became necessary to fall back on the other alternative, namely the assembling of an Irish Convention.

The members chosen to sit in the Convention were to be " representative men " in Emerson's meaning of the words, but not in the democratic sense as deriving their authority from direct popular election. Certain political organisations and parties were each invited to nominate a certain number ; the Churches were represented by their leading clergy ; men occupying public positions, such as chairmen of local authorities, were given *ex-officio* seats ; and a certain number were nominated by the Government. The total membership of this variegated assembly was ninety-five. The Sinn Fein party were invited to join, but refused to have anything to do with it, declaring that they would consider nothing short of complete independence for

Ireland. The majority of the Irish people thus stood aloof from the Convention altogether.

As the purpose for which the Convention was called was quickly lost sight of by many, and by none more than its Chairman, it is well to remember what that purpose was. If it had not been for the opposition of Ulster, the Home Rule Act of 1914 would have been in force for years, and none of the many attempts at settlement would have been necessary. The one and only thing required was to reconcile, if possible, the aspirations of Ulster with those of the rest of Ireland. That was the purpose, and the only purpose, of the Convention ; and in the letter addressed to Sir John Lonsdale equally with Mr. Redmond, the Prime Minister distinctly laid it down that unless its conclusions were accepted " by both sides," nothing could come of it. To leave no shadow of doubt on this point Mr. Bonar Law, in reply to a specific question, said that there could be no " substantial agreement " to which Ulster was not a party.

It is necessary to emphasise this point, because for such a purpose the heterogeneous conglomeration of Nationalists of all shades that formed the great majority of the Convention was worse than useless. The Convention was in reality a bi-lateral conference, in which one of the two sides was four times as numerous as the other. Yet much party capital was subsequently made of the fact that the Nationalist members agreed upon a scheme of Home Rule—an achievement which had no element of the miraculous or even of the unexpected about it.

Notwithstanding that the Sinn Fein party had displayed their contempt for the Convention, and under the delusion that it would " create an atmosphere of good-will " for its meeting, the Government released without condition or reservation all the prisoners concerned in the Easter rebellion of 1916. It was like playing a penny whistle to conciliate a cobra. The prisoners, from whose minds nothing was further than any thought of good-will to England, were received by the populace in Dublin with a rapturous ovation, their triumphal procession being headed by Mr. De Valera, who was soon afterwards elected member for East Clare by a majority of nearly thirty thousand.

Four months later, the Chief Secretary told Parliament that the young men of Southern Ireland, who had refused to serve in the Army, were being enrolled in preparation for another rebellion.

It was only after some hesitation that the Ulster Unionist Council decided not to hold aloof from the Convention, as the Sinn Feiners did. Carson accompanied Sir John Lonsdale to Belfast and explained the explicit pledges by Ministers that participation would not commit them to anything, that they would not be bound by any majority vote, and that without their concurrence no legislation was to be founded on any agreement between the other groups in the Convention; he also urged that Ulster could not refuse to do what the Government held would be helpful in the prosecution of the war.

The invitation to nominate five delegates was therefore accepted; and when the membership of the Convention was complete there were nineteen out of ninety-five who could be reckoned as supporters in general of the Ulster point of view. Among them were the Primate, the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Duke of Abercorn, the Marquis of Londonderry, Mr. H. M. Pollock, Chairman of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, one Labour representative, Mr. J. Hanna, and the Lord Mayors of Belfast and Derry. It was agreed that Mr. H. T. Barrie, member for North Derry, should act as chairman and leader of the Ulster group, and he discharged this difficult duty with unfailing tact and ability.

There was some difficulty in finding a suitable Chairman, for no party was willing to accept any strong man opposed to their own views, while an impartial man was not to be found in Ireland. Eventually the choice fell on Sir Horace Plunkett as a gentleman who, if eagerly supported by none, was accepted by each group as preferable to a more formidable opponent. Sir Horace made no pretence of impartiality. Whatever influence he possessed was used as a partisan of the Nationalists. He was not, like the Speaker of the House of Commons, a silent guardian of order; he often harangued the assembly, which, on one occasion at least, he addressed for over an hour; and

he issued manifestos, *questionnaires*, and letters to members, one of which was sharply censured as misleading both by Mr. Barrie and the Bishop of Raphoe.

The procedure adopted was described by the Chairman himself as "unprecedented." It was not only that, but was unsuitable in the last degree for the purpose in view. When it is borne in mind what that purpose was, it is clear that the only business-like method would have been to invite the Ulster delegates at the outset to formulate their objections to coming under the Home Rule Act of 1914, and then to see whether Mr. Redmond could make any concessions which would persuade Ulster to accept something less than the permanent exclusion of six counties, which had been their *minimum* hitherto.

The procedure actually followed was ludicrously different. The object, as stated by the chairman, was "to avoid raising contentious issues in such a way as to divide the Convention on party lines," [1] which, to say the least, was a curious method of handling the most contentious problem in British politics. A fine opportunity was offered to amateur constitution-mongers. Anyone was allowed to propound a scheme for the future government of Ireland, which, of course, was an encouragement to endless wide-ranging debate, with the least conceivable likelihood of arriving at definite decisions. Neither of the leaders of the two parties whose agreement was essential if the Convention was to have any result took the initiative in bringing forward proposals. Mr. Redmond was invited to do so, but declined. Mr. Barrie had no reason to do so, because the Ulster scheme for the government of Ireland was the legislative union. So it was left to individuals with no official responsibility to set forth their ideas, which became the subject of protracted debates of a general character.

It was further arranged that while contentious issues—the only ones that mattered—should be avoided, any conclusions reached on minor matters should be purely provisional, and contingent on agreement being come to ultimately on fundamentals. Month after month was spent in thus discussing such questions as the powers which

[1] *Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention* (Cd. 9019), p. 10.

an Irish Parliament ought to wield, while the question whether Ulster was to come into that Parliament was left to stand over. Committees and sub-committees were appointed to thresh out these details, and some of them relieved the tedium by wandering into such interesting by-ways of irrelevancy as housing and land purchase, all of which, in Gilbertian phrase, "had nothing to do with the case."

The Ulster group raised no objection to all this expenditure of time and energy. For they saw that it was not time wasted. From the standpoint of the highest national interest it was, indeed, more useful than anything the Convention could have accomplished by business-like methods. The summer and autumn of 1917, and the early months of 1918, covered a terribly critical period of the war. The country was never in greater peril, and the attitude of the Nationalists in the House of Commons added to the difficulties of the Government, as Mr. Bonar Law had complained in March. It was to placate them that the Convention had been summoned. It was a bone thrown to a snarling dog, and the longer there was anything to gnaw the longer would the dog keep quiet. The Ulster delegates understood this perfectly, and, as their chief desire was to help the Government to get on with the war, they had no wish to curtail the proceedings of the Convention, although they were never under the delusion that it could lead to anything in Ireland.

Having regard to the origin of this strange assembly of Irishmen it might have been supposed that its ingenuity would be directed to finding some modification of Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Act which Ulster could accept. That Act was the point of departure for its investigation, and the quest was *ex hypothesi* for some amendment that would not be an enlargement of the authority to be delegated to the subordinate Parliament, or any further loosening of the tie with Great Britain. Any proposal of the latter sort would be in the opposite direction from that in which the Convention was intended to travel. Yet this is precisely what was done from the very outset. The Act of 1914 was brushed aside as beneath contempt; and the Ulster delegates had to listen with amazement week after week

to proposals for giving to the whole of Ireland, including their own Province, a constitution practically as independent of Great Britain as that of the Dominions.

But what astonished the Ulstermen above everything was to find these extravagant demands of the Nationalists supported by those who were supposed to be representatives of Southern Unionism, with Lord Midleton, a prominent member of the Unionist Party in England, at their head. The only material point on which Lord Midleton differed from the extremists led by the Bishop of Raphoe was that he wished to limit complete fiscal autonomy for Ireland by reserving the control of Customs duties to the Imperial Parliament. Save in this single particular he joined forces with the Nationalists, and shocked the Unionists of the North by giving his support to a scheme of Home Rule going beyond anything ever suggested at Westminster by any Radical from Gladstone to Asquith.

This question of the financial powers to be exercised by the hypothetical Irish Parliament occupied the Convention and its committees for the greater part of its eight months of existence. In January 1918 Lord Midleton and Mr. Redmond came to an agreement on the subject which proved the undoing of them both, and produced the only really impressive scene in the Convention.

For some time Mr. Redmond had given the impression of being a tired man who had lost his wonted driving-force. He took little or no part in the lobbying and canvassing that was constantly going on behind the scenes in the Convention; he appeared to be losing grip as a leader. But he cannot be blamed for his anxiety to come to terms with Lord Midleton; and when he found, no doubt greatly to his surprise, that a Unionist leader was ready to abandon Unionist principles and to accept Dominion Home Rule for Ireland, subject to a single reservation on the subject of Customs, he naturally jumped at it, and assumed that his followers would do the same.

But, while Mr. Redmond had been losing ground, the influence of the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe had been on the increase, and that able and astute prelate was entirely opposed to the compromise on which Mr. Redmond and

Lord Midleton were agreed. On the evening of the 14th of January it came to the knowledge of Mr. Redmond that when the question came up for decision next day, he would find Mr. Devlin, his principal lieutenant, in league with the ecclesiastics against him. He was personally too far committed to retrace his steps; to go forward meant disaster, for it would produce a deep cleavage in the Nationalist ranks; and, as the state of affairs was generally known to members of the Convention, the sitting of the following day was anticipated with unusual interest.

There was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement when the Chairman took his seat on the 15th. Mr. Redmond entered a few seconds later and took his usual place without betraying the slightest sign of disturbed equanimity. The Bishop of Raphoe strode past him, casting to left and right swift, challenging glances. Mr. Devlin slipped quietly into his seat beside the leader he had thrown over, without a word or gesture of greeting. All over the room small groups of members engaged in whispered conversation; an air of mysterious expectancy prevailed. The Ulster members had been threatened that it was to be for them a day of disaster and dismay—a little isolated group, about to be deserted by friends and crushed by enemies. The Chairman, in an agitated voice, opened proceedings by inviting questions. There was no response. A minute or so of tense pause ensued. Then Mr. Redmond rose, and in a perfectly even voice and his usual measured diction, stated that he was aware that his proposal was repudiated by many of his usual followers; that the bishops were against him, and some leading Nationalists, including Mr. Devlin; that, while he believed if he persisted he would have a majority, the result would be to split his party, a thing he wished to avoid; and that he had therefore decided not to proceed with his amendment, and under these circumstances felt he could be of no further use to the Convention in the matter.

For a minute or two the assembly could not grasp the full significance of what had happened. Then it broke upon them that this was the fall of a notable leader, although they did not yet know that it was also the close

of a distinguished career. Mr. Redmond's demeanour throughout what must have been a painful ordeal was beyond all praise. There was not a quiver in his voice, nor a hesitation for word or phrase. His self-possession and dignity and high-bred bearing won the respect and sympathy of the most strenuous of political opponents, even while they recognised that the defeat of the Nationalist leader meant relief from pressure on themselves. Mr. Redmond took no further part in the work of the Convention ; his health was failing, and the members were startled by the news of his death on the 6th of March.

Not a single vote was taken in the Convention until the 12th of March, 1918, when it had been sitting for nearly seven months, and two days later the question which it had been summoned to consider, namely, the relation of Ulster to the rest of Ireland, was touched for the first time. The first clause in the Bishop of Raphoe's scheme, establishing a Home Rule constitution for all Ireland, having been carried with Lord Midleton's help against the vote of the nineteen representatives of Ulster, the latter proposed an amendment for the exclusion of the Province, and were, of course, defeated by the combined forces of Nationalism and Southern Unionism.

Thus, on the only issue that really mattered, there was no such " substantial agreement " as the Government had postulated as essential before legislation could be undertaken ; and on the 5th of April the Convention came to an end without having achieved any useful result, except that it gave the Government a breathing space from the Irish question to get on with the war.

It served, however, to bring prominently forward two of the Ulster representatives whose full worth had not till then been sufficiently appreciated. Mr. H. M. Pollock had, it is true, been a valued adviser of Sir Edward Carson on questions touching the trade and commerce of Belfast. But in the Convention he made more than one speech which proved him to be a financier with a comprehensive grasp of principle, and an extensive knowledge of the history and the intricate details of the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland.

Lord Londonderry (the 7th Marquis), who during his father's lifetime had represented an English constituency in the House of Commons and naturally took no very prominent part in Ulster affairs, although he made many excellent speeches on Home Rule both in Parliament and on English platforms, and was Colonel of a regiment of U.V.F., gave proof at once, on succeeding to the peerage in 1915, that he was desirous of doing everything in his power to fill his father's place in the Ulster Movement. He displayed the same readiness to subordinate personal convenience, and other claims on his time and energy, to the cause so closely associated historically with his family. But it was his work in the Convention that first convinced Ulstermen of his capacity as well as his zeal. Several of Lord Londonderry's speeches, and especially one in which he made an impromptu reply to Mr. Redmond, impressed the Convention with his debating power and his general ability; and it gave the greatest satisfaction in Ulster when it was realised that the son of the leader whose loss they mourned so deeply was as able as he was willing to carry on the hereditary tradition of service to the loyalist cause.

In another respect, too, the Convention had an indirect influence on the position in Ulster. When it appeared likely, in January 1918, that a deadlock would be reached in the Convention, the Prime Minister himself intervened. A letter to the Chairman was drafted and discussed in the Cabinet; but the policy which appeared to commend itself to his colleagues was one that Sir Edward Carson was unable to support, and he accordingly resigned office on the 21st, and was accompanied into retirement by Colonel Craig, the other Ulster member of the Ministry. Sir John Lonsdale, who for many years had been the very efficient Honorary Secretary and "Whip" of the Ulster Parliamentary Party, and its leader while Carson was in office, had been raised to the peerage at the New Year, with the title of Lord Armaghdale, so that the Ulster leadership was vacant for Carson to resume when he left the Government, and he was formally re-elected to the position on the 28th of January. It was fortunate for Ulster that the old

helmsman was again free to take his place at the wheel, for there was still some rough weather ahead.

The official Report of the Convention which was issued on the 10th of April was one of the most extraordinary documents ever published in a Government Blue Book.[1] It consisted for the most part of a confused bundle of separate Notes and Reports by a number of different groups and individuals, and numerous appendices comprising a mass of miscellaneous memoranda bristling with cross-references. The Chairman was restricted to providing a bald narrative of the proceedings without any of the usual critical estimate of the general results attained; but he made up for this by setting forth his personal opinions in a letter to the Prime Minister, which, without the sanction of the Convention, he prefixed to the Report. As it was no easy matter to gain any clear idea from the Report as to what the Convention had done, its proceedings while in session having been screened from publicity by drastic censorship of the Press, many people contented themselves with reading Sir Horace Plunkett's unauthorised letter to Mr. Lloyd George; and, as it was in some important respects gravely misleading, it is not surprising that the truth in regard to the Convention was never properly understood, and the Ulster Unionist Council had solid justification for its resolution censuring the Chairman's conduct as "unprecedented and unconstitutional."

In this personal letter, as was to be expected of a partisan of the Nationalists, Sir Horace Plunkett laid stress on the fact that Lord Midleton had "accepted self-government for Ireland"—by which was meant, of course, not self-government such as Ireland always enjoyed through her representation, and indeed over-representation, in the Imperial Parliament, but through separate institutions. But if it had not been for this support of separate institutions by the Southern Unionists there would not have been even a colourable pretext for the assertion of Sir Horace Plunkett that "a larger measure of agreement has been reached upon the principles and details of Irish self-government than has ever yet been attained." The really

[1] Cd. 9019.

surprising thing was how little agreement was displayed even among the Nationalists themselves, who on several important issues were nearly equally divided.

It was soon seen how little the policy of Lord Midleton was approved by those whom he was supposed to represent. Although it was exceedingly difficult to obtain accurate information about what was going on in the Convention, enough became known in Dublin to cause serious misgiving to Southern Unionists. The Council of the Irish Unionist Alliance, who had nominated Lord Midleton as a delegate, asked him to confer with them on the subject; but he refused. On the 4th of March, 1918, a "Call to Unionists," a manifesto signed by twenty-four influential Southern Unionists, appeared in the Press. A Southern Unionist Committee was formed which before the end of May was able to publish the names of 350 well-known men in all walks of life who were in accord with the "Call," and to announce that the supporters of their protest against Lord Midleton's proceedings numbered upwards of fourteen thousand, of whom more than two thousand were farmers in the South and West.

This Committee then took steps to purge the Irish Unionist Alliance by making it more truly representative of Southern Unionist opinion. A special meeting of the Council of the organisation on the 24th of January, 1919, brought on a general engagement between Lord Midleton and his opponents. The general trend of opinion was disclosed when, after the defeat of a motion by Lord Midleton for excluding Ulster Unionists from full membership of the Alliance, Sir Edward Carson was elected one of its Presidents, and Lord Farnham was chosen Chairman of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee was then entirely reconstituted, by the rejection of every one of Lord Midleton's supporters; and the new body issued a statement explaining the grounds of dissatisfaction with Lord Midleton's action in the Convention, and declaring that he had "lost the confidence of the general body of Southern Unionists." Thereupon Lord Midleton and a small aristocratic clique associated with him seceded from the Alliance, and set up a little organisation of their own.

CHAPTER XXIII

NATIONALISTS AND CONSCRIPTION

WHILE the Irish Convention was toilfully bringing to a close its eight months' career of futility, the British Empire was in the grip of the most terrible ordeal through which it has ever passed. On the 21st of March, 1918, the assembled Irishmen in Dublin were discussing whether or not proportional representation should form part of the hypothetical constitution of Ireland, and on the same day the Germans well-nigh overwhelmed the 5th Army at the opening of the great offensive campaign which threatened to break irretrievably the Allied line by the capture of Amiens. The world held its breath. Englishmen hardly dared to think of the fate that seemed impending over their country. Irishmen continued complacently debating the paltry details of the Bishop of Raphoe's clauses. Irishmen and Englishmen together were being killed or maimed by scores of thousands in a supreme effort to stay the advance of the Boche to Paris and the sea.

It happened that on the very day when the Report of the Convention was laid on the table of the House of Commons, the Prime Minister made a statement of profound gravity, beginning with words such as the British Parliament can never before have been compelled to hear from the lips of the head of the Government. For the moment, said Mr. Lloyd George, there was a lull in the storm; but more attacks were to come, and—

> The "fate of the Empire, the fate of Europe, and the fate of liberty throughout the world may depend on the success with which the very last of these attacks is resisted and countered."

Mr. Asquith struck the same note, urging the House—

"With all the earnestness and with all the solemnity of which I am capable, to realise that never before in the experience of any man within these walls, or of his fathers and his forefathers, has this country and all the great traditions and ideals which are embodied in our history—never has this, the most splendid inheritance ever bequeathed to a people, been in greater peril, or in more need of united safeguarding than at this present time."

Not Demosthenes himself, in his most impassioned appeal to the Athenians, more fitly matched moving words to urgent occasion than these two statesmen in the simple, restrained sentences, in which they warned the Commons of the peril hanging over England.

But was eloquent persuasion really required at such a moment to still the voice of faction in the British House of Commons? Let those who would assume the negative study the official Parliamentary Report of the debate on the 9th of April, 1918. They will find a record which no loyal Irishman will ever be able to read without a tingling sense of shame. The whole body of members, with one exception, listened to the Prime Minister's grave words in silence touched with awe, feeling that perhaps they were sitting there on the eve of the greatest tragedy in their country's history. The single exception was the Nationalist Party. From those same benches whence arose nineteen years back the never-forgotten cheers that greeted the tale of British disaster in South Africa, now came a shower of snarling interruptions that broke persistently into the Prime Minister's speech, and with angry menace impeded his unfolding of the Government's proposals for meeting the supreme ordeal of the war.

What was the reason? It was because Ireland, the greater part of which had till now successfully shirked its share of privation and sacrifice, was at last to be asked to take up its corner of the burden. The need for men to replace casualties at the front was pressing, urgent, imperative. Many indeed blamed the Government for having delayed too long in filling the depleted ranks of our splendid armies in France; the moment had come when another day's delay would have been criminal. As Mr. Lloyd

George pointed out, the battle that was being waged in front of Amiens "proves that the enemy has definitely decided to seek a military decision this year, whatever the consequences to himself." The Germans had just called up a fresh class of recruits calculated to place more than half a million of efficient young men in the line. The collapse of Russia had released the vast German armies of the East for use against England and France. It was under such circumstances that the Prime Minister proposed

"to submit to Parliament to-day certain recommendations in order to assist this country and the Allies to weather the storm. They will involve," continued Mr. Lloyd George, "extreme sacrifices on the part of large classes of the population, and nothing would justify them but the most extreme necessity, and the fact that we are fighting for all that is essential and most sacred in the national life."

The age limit for compulsory military service was to be raised from forty-two to fifty, and Ireland was to be included under the new Military Service Bill now introduced. England, Scotland, and Wales had cheerfully submitted to conscription when first enacted by Mr. Asquith in 1916, and to all the additional combings of industry and extension of obligation that had been required in the past two years. Agriculture and other essential industries were being starved for want of labour, and men had actually been brought back from the sorely pressed armies to produce supplies imperatively needed at home.

But from all this Ireland had hitherto been exempt. To escape the call of the country a man had only to prove that he was "ordinarily resident in Ireland"; for conscription did not cross the Irish Sea. From most of the privations cheerfully borne in Great Britain the Irishman had been equally free. Food rationing did not trouble him, and, lest he should go short of accustomed plenty, it was even forbidden to carry a parcel of butter across the Channel from Ireland. Horse-racing went on as usual. Emigration had been suspended during the war, so that Ireland was unusually full of young men who, owing to the unwonted prosperity of the country resulting from war

prices for its produce, were " having the time of their lives." Mr. Bonar Law, in the debates on the Military Service Bill, gave reasons for the calculation that there were not far short of 400,000 young men of military age, and of " A1 " physique, in Ireland available for the Army.

No wonder that Mr. Lloyd George said it would be impossible to leave this reservoir of man-power untouched when men of fifty, whose sons were already with the colours, were to be called up in Great Britain ! But the bare suggestion of doing such a thing raised a hurricane of angry vituperation and menace from the Nationalists in the House of Commons. When Mr. Lloyd George, in conciliatory accents, observed that he had no wish to raise unnecessary controversy, as Heaven knew they had trouble enough already, " You will get more of it," shouted Mr. Flavin. " You will have another battle front in Ireland," interjected Mr. Byrne. Mr. Flavin, getting more and more excited, called out, with reference to the machinery for enrolment explained by the Prime Minister —" It will never begin. Ireland will not have it at any price " ; and again, a moment later, " You come across and try to take them." Mr. Devlin was fully as fierce as these less prominent members of his party, and after many wrathful interruptions he turned aside the debate into a discussion about a trumpery report of one of the sub-committees of the Irish Convention.

It was truly a sad and shameful scene to be witnessed in the House of Commons at such a moment. It would have been so even if the contention of the Nationalists had been reasonably tenable. But it was not. They maintained that only an Irish Parliament had the right to enforce conscription in Ireland. But at the beginning of the war they had accepted the proviso that it should run its course before Home Rule came into operation. And even if it had been in operation, and a Parliament had been sitting in Dublin under Mr. Asquith's Act, which the Nationalists had accepted as a settlement of their demands, that Parliament would have had nothing to do with the raising of military forces by conscription or otherwise, this being a duty reserved, as in every federal or quasi-

federal constitution, for the central legislative authority alone.

But it was useless to point this out to the infuriated Nationalist members. Mr. William O'Brien denounced the idea of compelling Irishmen to bear the same burden as their British fellow-subjects as "a declaration of war against Ireland"; and he and Mr. Healy joined Mr. Dillon and his followers in opposing with all their parliamentary skill, and all their voting power, the extension to Ireland of compulsory service. Mr. Healy, whose vindictive memory had not forgotten the Curragh Incident before the war, could not forbear from having an ungenerous fling at General Gough, who had just been driven back by the overwhelming numerical superiority of the German attack, and who, at the moment when Mr. Healy was taunting him in the House of Commons, was re-forming his gallant 5th Army to resist the enemy's further advance.

In comparison with this Mr. Healy's stale gibe at "Carson's Army," however inappropriate to the occasion, was a venial offence. Carson himself replied in a gentle and conciliatory tone to Mr. Healy's coarse diatribe.

"My honourable friend," he said, "talked of Carson's Army. You may, if you like, call it with contempt Carson's Army. But it has just gone into action for the fourth time, and many of them have paid the supreme sacrifice. They have covered themselves with glory, and, what is more, they have covered Ireland with glory, and they have left behind sad homes throughout the small hamlets of Ulster, as I well know, losing three or four sons in many a home."

On behalf of Ulster Carson gave unhesitating support to the Government. He and his colleagues from Ulster had always voted against the exemption of Ireland from the Military Service Acts. It was true, no doubt, as the Nationalists jeeringly maintained, that conscription was no more desired in Ulster than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Of course it was not; it was liked nowhere. But Carson declared that "equality of sacrifice" was the principle to be acted upon, and Ulster

accepted it. He "would go about hanging his head in shame," if his own part of the United Kingdom were absolved from sacrifice which the national necessity imposed on the inhabitants of Great Britain.

The Bill was carried through by the 16th of April in the teeth of Nationalist opposition maintained through all its stages. Mr. Bonar Law announced emphatically that the Government intended to enforce the compulsory powers in Ireland; but he also said that yet another attempt was to be made to settle the constitutional question by bringing in "at an early date" a measure of Home Rule which the Government hoped might be carried at once and "without violent controversy."

After the experience of the past this seemed an amazingly sanguine estimate of the prospects of any proposals that ingenuity could devise. But what the nature of the measure was to have been was never made known; for the Bill was still in the hands of a drafting committee when a dangerous German intrigue in Ireland was discovered; and the Lord-Lieutenant made a proclamation on the 18th of May announcing that the Government had information "that certain of the King's subjects in Ireland had entered into a treasonable communication with the German enemy, and that strict measures must be taken to put down this German plot." [1] On the same day one hundred and fifty Sinn Feiners were arrested, including Mr. De Valera and Mr. Arthur Griffith, and on the 25th a statement was published indicating the connection between this conspiracy and Casement's designs in 1916. The Government had definitely ascertained some weeks earlier, and must have known at the very time when they were promising a new Home Rule Bill, that a plan for landing arms in Ireland was ripe for execution.[2] Indeed, on the 12th of April a German agent who had landed in Ireland was arrested, with papers in his possession showing that De Valera had worked out a detailed organisation of the rebel army, and expected to be in a position to muster half a million of trained men.[3]

Such was the fruit of the Government's infatuation which,

[1] *Annual Register*, 1918, p. 87. [2] Ibid., p. 88. [3] Ibid.

under the delusion of "creating an atmosphere of good-will" for the Convention, had released a few months previously a number of dangerous men who had been proved to be in league with the Germans, and who now took advantage of this clemency to conspire afresh with the foreign enemy. It was not surprising that Mr. Bonar Law said it was impossible for the Government, under these circumstances, to proceed with their proposals for a new Home Rule Bill.

On the other hand, no sooner was the Military Service Act on the Statute-book than the Government began to recede from Mr. Bonar Law's declaration that they would at all costs enforce it in Ireland. They intimated that if voluntary recruiting improved it might be possible to dispense with compulsion. But although Mr. Shortt—who succeeded Mr. Duke as Chief Secretary in May, at the same time as Lord Wimborne was replaced in the Lord-Lieutenancy by Field-Marshal Lord French—complained on the 29th of July that the Nationalists had given no help to the Government in obtaining voluntary recruits in Ireland, and, "instead of taking Sinn Fein by the throat, had tried to go one better,"[1] the compulsory powers of the Military Service Act remained a dead letter.

The fact was that the Nationalists had followed up their fierce opposition to the Bill by raising a still more fierce agitation in Ireland against conscription. In this they joined hands with Sinn Fein, and the whole weight of the Catholic Church was thrown into the same scale. From the altars of that Church the thunderbolts of ecclesiastical anathema were loosed against the Government, and—what was more effective—against any who should obey the call to arms. The Government gave way before the violence of the storm, and the lesson to be learnt from their defeat was not thrown away on the rebel party in Ireland. There was, naturally, widespread indignation in England at the spectacle of the youth of Ireland taking its ease at home and earning extravagantly high war-time wages while middle-aged bread-winners in England were compulsorily called to the colours; but the marvellously easy-

[1] *Annual Register*, 1918, p. 90.

going disposition of Englishmen submitted to the injustice with no more than a legitimate grumble.

In June 1918, while this agitation against conscription was at its height, the hostility of the Nationalists took a new turn. A manifesto, intended as a justification of their resistance to conscription, was issued in the form of a letter to Mr. Wilson, President of the United States, signed by Mr. Dillon, Mr. Devlin, Mr. William O'Brien, Mr. Healy, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and some others, including leaders of Sinn Fein. It was a remarkable document, the authorship of which was popularly attributed to Mr. T. M. Healy. If it ever came under the eye of Mr. Wilson, a man of literary taste and judgment, it must have afforded him a momentary diversion from the cares of his exalted office. A longer experience than his of diplomatic correspondence would fail to produce from the pigeon-holes of all the Chanceries a rival to this extraordinary composition, the ill-arranged paragraphs of which formed an inextricable jumble of irrelevant material, in which bad logic, bad history, and barren invective were confusedly intermingled in a torrent of turgid rhetoric. The extent of its range may be judged from the fact that Shakespeare's allusions to Joan of Arc were not deemed too remote from the subject of conscription in Ireland during the Great War to find a place in this amazing despatch. For the amusement of anyone who may care to examine so rare a curiosity of English prose, it will be found in full in the Appendix to this volume, where it may be compared by way of contrast with the restrained rejoinder sent also to President Wilson by Sir Edward Carson, the Lord Mayor of Belfast, the Mayor of Derry, and several loyalist representatives of Labour in Ulster.

In the Nationalist letter to President Wilson reference was made more than once to the sympathy that prevailed in Ireland in the eighteenth century with the American colonists in the War of Independence. The use made of it was a good example of the way in which a half-truth may, for argumentative purposes, be more misleading than a complete falsehood. "To-day, as in the days of George Washington"—so Mr. Wilson was informed—"nearly half

the American forces have been furnished from the descendants of our banished race." No mention was made of the fact that the members of the "banished race" in Washington's army were Presbyterian emigrants from Ulster, who formed almost the entire population of great districts in the American Colonies at that time.[1] The late Mr. Whitelaw Reid told an Edinburgh audience in 1911 that more than half the Presbyterian population of Ulster emigrated to America between 1730 and 1770, and that at the date of the Revolution they made more than one-sixth of the population of the Colonies. The Declaration of Independence itself, he added—

"Is sacredly preserved in the handwriting of an Ulsterman, who was Secretary of Congress. It was publicly read by an Ulsterman, and first printed by another. Washington's first Cabinet had four members, of whom one was an Ulsterman."[2]

It is, of course, true that not all Ulster Presbyterians of that period were the firm and loyal friends of Great Britain that their descendants became after a century's experience of the legislative Union. But it is the latter who best in Ireland can trace kinship with the founders of the United States, and who are entitled—if any Irishmen are—to base on that kinship a claim to the sympathy and support of the American people.

[1] See Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. iv, p. 430.

[2] See Lecture to the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution by Whitelaw Reid, reported in *The Scotsman*, November 2nd, 1911.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ULSTER PARLIAMENT

On the 25th of November, 1918, the Parliament elected in December 1910 was at last dissolved, a few days after the Armistice with Germany. The new House of Commons was very different from the old. Seventy-two Sinn Fein members were returned from Ireland, sweeping away all but half a dozen of the old Nationalist party; but, in accordance with their fixed policy, the Sinn Fein members never presented themselves at Westminster to take the oath and their seats. That quarter of the House of Commons which for thirty years had been packed with the most fierce and disciplined of the political parties was therefore now given over to mild supporters of the Coalition Government, the only remnant of so-called "constitutional Nationalism" being Mr. T. P. O'Connor, Mr. Devlin, Captain Redmond, and two or three less prominent companions, who survived like monuments of a bygone age.

Ulster Unionists, on the other hand, were greatly strengthened by the recent Redistribution Act. Sir Edward Carson was elected member for the great working-class constituency of the Duncairn Division of Belfast, instead of for Dublin University, which he had so long represented, and twenty-two ardent supporters accompanied him from Ulster to Westminster. In the reconstruction of the Government which followed the election, Carson was pressed to return to office, but declined. Colonel James Craig, whose war services in connection with the Ulster Division were rewarded by a baronetcy, became Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Pensions, and the Marquis of Londonderry accepted office as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Air Ministry.

Although the termination of hostilities by the Armistice

was not in the legal sense the " end of the war," it brought it within sight. No one in January 1919 dreamt that the process of making peace and ratifying the necessary treaties would drag on for a seemingly interminable length of time, and it was realised, with grave misgiving in Ulster, that the Home Rule Act of 1914 would necessarily come into force as soon as peace was finally declared, while as yet nothing had been done to redeem the promise of an Amending Bill given by Mr. Asquith, and reiterated by Mr. Lloyd George. The compact between the latter and the Unionist Party, on which the Coalition had swept the country, had made it clear that fresh Irish legislation was to be expected, and the general lines on which it would be based were laid down ; but there was also an intimation that a settlement must wait till the condition of Ireland should warrant it.[1]

The state of Ireland was certainly not such as to make it appear probable that any sane Government would take the risk of handing over control of the country immediately to the Sinn Feiners, whom the recent elections had proved to be in an overwhelming majority in the three southern provinces. By the law, not of England alone, but of every civilised State, that party was tainted through and through with high treason. It had attempted to " succour the King's enemies " in every way in its power. The Government had in its possession evidence of two conspiracies, in which, during the late frightful war, these Irishmen had been in league with the Germans to bring defeat and disaster upon England and her Allies, and the second of these plots was only made possible by the misconceived clemency of the Government in releasing from custody the ringleaders in the first.

And these Sinn Fein rebels left the Government no excuse for any illusion as to their being either chastened or contrite in spirit. Contemptuously ignoring their election as members of the Imperial Parliament, where they never put in an appearance because it would require them to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown, they openly held a Congress in Dublin in January 1919 where a Declaration

[1] See Letter from Mr. Lloyd George to Mr. Bonar Law, published in the Press on November 18th, 1918.

of Independence was read, and a demand made for the evacuation of Ireland by the forces of the Crown. A "Ministry" was also appointed, which purported to make itself responsible for administration in Ireland. Outrages of a daring character became more and more frequent, and gave evidence of being the work of efficient organisation.

President Wilson's coinage of the unfortunate and ambiguous expression "self-determination" made it a catch-penny cry in relation to Ireland; but, in reply to Mr. Devlin's demand for a recognition of that "principle," Mr. Lloyd George pointed out that it had been tried in the Convention, with the result that both Nationalists and Unionists had been divided among themselves, and he said he despaired of any settlement in Ireland until Irishmen could agree. Nevertheless, in October 1919 he appointed a Cabinet Committee, with Mr. Walter Long as Chairman, to make recommendations for dealing with the question of Irish Government.

But murders of soldiers and police had now become so scandalously frequent that in November a Proclamation was issued suppressing Sinn Fein and kindred organisations. It did nothing to improve the state of the country, which grew worse than ever in the last few weeks of the year. On the 19th of December a carefully planned attempt on the life of the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord French, proved how complete was the impunity relied upon by the organised assassins who, calling themselves an Irish Republican Army, terrorised the country.

It was in such conditions that, just before the close of the parliamentary session, the Prime Minister disclosed the intentions of the Government. He laid down three "basic facts," which he said governed the situation: (1) Three-fourths of the Irish people were bitterly hostile, and were at heart rebels against the Crown and Government. (2) Ulster was a complete contrast, which would make it an outrage to place her people under the rest of Ireland.[1] (3) No separation from the Empire could be tolerated, and any attempt to force it would be fought as the United States

[1] Precisely twenty-four months later this outrage was committed by Mr. Lloyd George himself, with the concurrence of Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

had fought against secession. On these considerations he based the proposals which were to be embodied in legislation in the next session. Sir Edward Carson, who in the light of past experience was too wary to take all Mr. Lloyd George's declarations at their face value, said at once that he could give no support to the policy outlined by the Prime Minister until he was convinced that the latter intended to go through with it to the end.

The Bill to give effect to these proposals (which became the Government of Ireland Act, 1920) was formally introduced on the 25th of February, 1920, and Carson then went over to Belfast to consult with the Unionist Council as to the action to be taken by the Ulster members.

The measure was a long and complicated one of seventy clauses and six schedules. Its effect, stated briefly, was to set up two Parliaments in Ireland, one for the six Protestant counties of Ulster and the other for the rest of Ireland. In principle it was the " clean cut " which had been several times proposed, except that, instead of retaining Ulster in legislative union with Great Britain, she was to be endowed with local institutions of her own in every respect similar to, and commensurate with, those given to the Parliament in Dublin. In addition, a Council of Ireland was created, composed of an equal number of members from each of the two legislatures. This Council was given powers in regard to private bill legislation, and matters of minor importance affecting both parts of the island which the two Parliaments might mutually agree to commit to its administration. Power was given to the two Parliaments to establish by identical Acts at any time a Parliament for all Ireland to supersede the Council, and to form a single autonomous constitution for the whole of Ireland.

The Council of Ireland occupied a prominent place in the debates on the Bill. It was held up as a symbol of the " unity of Ireland," and the authors of the measure were able to point to it as supplying machinery by which " partition " could be terminated as soon as Irishmen agreed among themselves in wishing to have a single national Government. It was not a feature of the Bill that found favour in Ulster; but, as it could do no harm and

provided an argument against those who denounced "partition," the Ulster members did not think it worth while to oppose it.

But when Carson met the Ulster Unionist Council on the 6th of March the most difficult point he had to deal with was the same that had given so much trouble in the negotiations of 1916. The Bill defined the area subject to the "Parliament of Northern Ireland" as the six counties which the Ulster Council had agreed four years earlier to accept as the area to be excluded from the Home Rule Act. The question now to be decided was whether this same area should still be accepted, or an amendment moved for including in Northern Ireland the other three counties of the Province of Ulster. The same harrowing experience which the Council had undergone in 1916 was repeated in an aggravated form.[1] To separate themselves from fellow loyalists in Monaghan, Cavan, and Donegal was hateful to every delegate from the other six counties, and it was heartrending to be compelled to resist another moving appeal by so valued a friend as Lord Farnham. But the inexorable index of statistics demonstrated that, although Unionists were in a majority when geographical Ulster was considered as a unit, yet the distribution of population made it certain that a separate Parliament for the whole Province would have a precarious existence, while its administration of purely Nationalist districts would mean unending conflict.

It was, therefore, decided that no proposal for extending the area should be made by the Ulster members. Carson made it clear in the debates on the Bill that Ulster had not moved from her old position of desiring nothing except the Union; that he was still convinced there was "no alternative to the Union unless separation"; but that, while he would take no responsibility for a Bill which Ulster did not want, he and his colleagues would not actively oppose its progress to the Statute-book.

It did not, however, receive the Royal Assent until two days before Christmas, and during all these months the condition of Ireland was one of increasing anarchy. The

[1] *Ante*, p. 248.

Act provided that, if the people of Southern Ireland refused to work the new Constitution, the administration should be carried on by a system similar to Crown Colony government. Carson gave an assurance that in Ulster they would do their best to make the Act a success, and immediate steps were taken in Belfast to make good this undertaking.

To the people of Ulster the Act of 1920, though it involved the sacrifice of much that they had ardently hoped to preserve, came as a relief to their worst fears. It was represented as a final settlement, and finality was what they chiefly desired, if they could get it without being forced to submit to a Dublin Parliament. The disloyal conduct of Nationalist Ireland during the war, and the treason and terrorism organised by Sinn Fein after the war, had widened the already broad gulf between North and South. The determination never to submit to an all-Ireland Parliament was more firmly fixed than ever. The Act of 1920, which repealed Mr. Asquith's Act of 1914, gave Ulster what she had prepared to fight for, if necessary, before the war. It was the fulfilment of the Craigavon resolution—to take over the government "of those districts which they could control." [1] The Parliament of Northern Ireland established by the Act was in fact the legalisation of the Ulster Provisional Government of 1913. It placed Ulster in a position of equality with the South, both politically and economically. The two Legislatures in Ireland possessed the same powers, and were subject to an equal reservation of authority to the Imperial Parliament.

But with the passing of the Act the long and consummate leadership of Sir Edward Carson came to an end. If he had not succeeded in bringing the Ulster people into a Promised Land, he had at least conducted an orderly retreat to a position of safety. The almost miraculous skill with which he had directed all the operations of a protracted and harassing campaign, avoiding traps and pitfalls at every step, foreseeing and providing against countless crises, frustrating with unfailing adroitness the manœuvres both of implacable enemies and treacherous

[1] See *ante*, p. 51.

" friends," was fully appreciated by his grateful followers, who had for years past regarded him with an intensity of personal devotion seldom given even to the greatest of political leaders. But he felt that the task of opening a new chapter in the history of Ulster, and of inaugurating the new institutions now established, was work for younger hands. Hard as he was pressed to accept the position of first Prime Minister of Ulster, he firmly persisted in his refusal; and on his recommendation the man who had been his able and faithful lieutenant throughout the long Ulster Movement was unanimously chosen to succeed him in the leadership.

Sir James Craig did not hesitate to respond to the call, although to do so he had to resign an important post in the British Government, that of Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, with excellent prospects of further promotion. As soon as the elections in " Northern Ireland," conducted under the system of Proportional Representation, as provided by the Act of 1920, were complete, Sir James, whose followers numbered forty as against a Nationalist and Sinn Fein minority of twelve, was sent for by the Viceroy and commissioned to form a Ministry. He immediately set himself to his new and exceedingly difficult duties with characteristic thoroughness. The whole apparatus of government administration had to be built up from the foundation. Departments, for which there was no existing office accommodation or personnel, had to be called into existence and efficiently organised, and all this preliminary work had to be undertaken at a time when the territory subject to the new Government was beset by open and concealed enemies working havoc with bombs and revolvers, with which the Government had not yet legal power to cope.

But Sir James Craig pressed on with the work, undismayed by the difficulties, and resolved that the Parliament in Belfast should be opened at the earliest possible date. The Marquis of Londonderry gave a fresh proof of his Ulster patriotism by resigning his office in the Imperial Government and accepting the portfolio of Education in Sir James Craig's Cabinet, and with it the leadership of the

Ulster Senate ; in which the Duke of Abercorn also, to the great satisfaction of the Ulster people, consented to take a seat. Mr. Dawson Bates, the indefatigable Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council during the whole of the Ulster Movement, was appointed Minister for Home Affairs, and Mr. E. M. Archdale became Minister for Agriculture. The first act of the House of Commons of Northern Ireland was to choose Major Hugh O'Neill as their Speaker, while the important position of Chairman of Committees was entrusted to Mr. Thomas Moles, one of the ablest recruits of the Ulster Parliamentary Party, whom the General Election of 1918 had sent to Westminster as one of the members for Belfast, and who had given ample evidence of his capacity both in the Imperial Parliament and on the Secretarial Staff of the Irish Convention of 1917.

Meantime, in the South the Act of 1920 was treated with absolute contempt ; no step was taken to hold elections or to form an Administration, although it must be remembered that the flouted Act conferred a larger measure of Home Rule than had ever been offered by previous Bills. Thus by one of those curious ironies that have continually marked the history of Ireland, the only part of the island where Home Rule operated was the part that had never desired it, while the provinces that had demanded Home Rule for generations refused to use it when it was granted them.

In Ulster the new order of things was accepted with acquiescence rather than with enthusiasm. But the warmer emotion was immediately called forth when it became known that His Majesty the King had decided to open the Ulster Parliament in person on the 22nd of June, 1921, especially as it was fully realised that, owing to the anarchical condition of the country, the King's presence in Belfast would be a characteristic disregard of personal danger in the discharge of public duty. And when, on the eve of the royal visit, it was intimated that the Queen had been graciously pleased to accede to Sir James Craig's request that she should accompany the King to Belfast, the enthusiasm of the loyal people of the North rose to fever heat.

At any time, and under any circumstances, the reigning Sovereign and his Consort would have been received by a population so noted for its sentiment of loyalty to the Throne as that of Ulster with demonstrations of devotion exceeding the ordinary. But the present occasion was felt to have a very special significance. The opening of Parliament by the King in State is one of the most ancient and splendid of ceremonial pageants illustrating the history of British institutions. It was felt in Ulster that the association of this time-honoured ceremonial with the baptism, so to speak, of the latest offspring of the Mother of Parliaments stamped the Royal Seal upon the achievement of Ulster, and gave it a dignity, prestige, and promise of permanence which might otherwise have been lacking. No city in the United Kingdom had witnessed so many extraordinary displays of popular enthusiasm in the last ten years as Belfast, some of which had left on the minds of observers a firm belief that such intensity of emotion in a great concourse of people could not be exceeded. The scene in the streets when the King and Queen drove from the quay, on the arrival of the royal yacht, to the City Hall, was held by general consent to equal, since it could not surpass, any of those great demonstrations of the past in popular fervour. At any rate, persons of long experience in attendance on the Royal Family gave it as their opinion in the evening that they had never before seen so impressive a display of public devotion to the person of the Sovereign.

Two buildings in Belfast inseparably associated with Ulster's stand for union, the City Hall and the Ulster Hall, were the scenes of the chief events of the King's visit. The former, described by one of the English correspondents as "easily the most magnificent municipal building in the three Kingdoms," [1] was placed at the disposal of the Ulster Government by the Corporation for temporary use as a Parliament House. The Council Chamber, a fine hall of dignified proportions with a dais and canopied chair at the upper end, made an appropriate frame for the ceremony of opening Parliament, and the arrangements both of the

[1] *The Morning Post*, June 23rd, 1921.

Chamber itself and of the approaches and entrances to it made it a simple matter to model the procedure as closely as possible on that followed at Westminster.

Among the many distinguished people who assembled in the Ulster Capital for the occasion, there was one notable absentee. Lord Carson of Duncairn—for this was the title that Sir Edward Carson had assumed on being appointed a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary a few weeks previously—was detained in London by judicial duty in the House of Lords; and possibly reasons of delicacy not difficult to understand restrained him from making arrangements for absence. But the marked ovation given to Lady Carson wherever she was recognised in the streets of Belfast showed that the great leader was not absent from the popular mind at this moment of vindication of his statesmanship.

Such an event as that which brought His Majesty to Belfast was naturally an occasion for bestowing marks of distinction for public service. Sir James Craig wisely made it also an occasion for letting bygones be bygones by recommending Lord Pirrie for a step in the Peerage. Among those who received honours were several whose names have appeared in the preceding chapters of this book. Mr. William Robert Young, for thirty years one of the most indefatigable workers for the Unionist cause in Ulster, and Colonel Wallace, one of the most influential of Carson's local lieutenants, were made Privy Councillors, as was also Colonel Percival-Maxwell, who raised and commanded a battalion of the Ulster Division in the war. Colonel F. H. Crawford and Colonel Spender were awarded the C.B.E. for services to the nation during the war; but Ulstermen did not forget services of another sort to the Ulster cause before the Germans came on the scene.[1] A knighthood was given to Mr. Dawson Bates, who had exchanged the Secretaryship of the Ulster Unionist Council for the portfolio of a Cabinet Minister.

These honours were bestowed by the King in person at an investiture held in the Ulster Hall in the afternoon. There must have been many present whose minds went

[1] See *ante*, Chapter XVIII.

back to some of the most stirring events of Ulster's domestic history which had been transacted in the same building within recent years. Did Sir Hamar Greenwood, the Chief Secretary, as he stood in attendance on the Sovereign in the resplendent uniform of a Privy Councillor, look in curiosity round the walls which he and Mr. Churchill had been prohibited from entering on a memorable occasion when they had to content themselves with an imported tent in a football field instead? Did Colonel Wallace's thoughts wander back to the scene of wild enthusiasm in that hall on the evening before the Covenant, when he presented the ancient Boyne flag to the Ulster leader? Did those who spontaneously started the National Anthem in the presence of the King without warrant from the prearranged programme, and made the Queen smile at the emphasis with which they "confounded politics" and "frustrated knavish tricks," remember the fervour with which on many a past occasion the same strains testified to Ulster's loyalty in the midst of perplexity and apprehension? If these memories crowded in, they must have added to the sense of relief arising from the conviction that the ceremony they were now witnessing was the realisation of the policy propounded by Carson, when he declared that Ulster must always be ruled either by the Imperial Parliament or by a Government of her own.

But the moment of all others on that memorable day that must have been suggestive of such reflections was when the King formally opened the first Parliament of Northern Ireland in the same building that had witnessed the signing of the Ulster Covenant. Without the earlier event the later could not have been. If 1921 could have been fully foreseen in 1912 it might have appeared to many Covenanters as the disappointment of a cherished ideal. But those who lived to listen to the King's Speech in the City Hall realised that it was the dissipation of foreboding. However regarded, it was, as King George himself pronounced, "a profoundly moving occasion in Irish history."

The Speech from the Throne in which these words occurred made a deep impression all over the world, and nowhere more than in Ulster itself. No people more

ardently shared the touchingly expressed desire of the King that his coming to Ireland might " prove to be the first step towards an end of strife amongst her people, whatever their race or creed." So, too, when His Majesty told the Ulster Parliament that he " felt assured they would do their utmost to make it an instrument of happiness and good government for all parts of the community which they represented," the Ulster people believed that the King's confidence in them would not prove to have been misplaced.

Happily, no prophetic vision of those things that were shortly to come to pass broke in to disturb the sense of satisfaction with the haven that had been reached. The future, with its treachery, its alarms, its fresh causes of uncertainty and of conflict, was mercifully hidden from the eyes of the Ulster people when they acclaimed the inauguration of their Parliament by their King. They accepted responsibility for the efficient working of institutions thus placed in their keeping by the highest constitutional Authority in the British Empire, although they had never asked for them, and still believed that the system they had been driven to abandon was better than the new ; and they opened this fresh chapter in their history in firm faith that what had received so striking a token of the Sovereign's sympathy and approval would never be taken from them except with their own consent.

APPENDIX A

NATIONALIST LETTER TO PRESIDENT WILSON

To the President of the United States of America

Sir,

When, a century and a half ago, the American Colonies dared to assert the ancient principle that the subject should not be taxed without the consent of his representatives, England strove to crush them. To-day England threatens to crush the people of Ireland if they do not accept a tax, not in money but in blood, against the protest of their representatives.

During the American Revolution the champions of your liberties appealed to the Irish Parliament against British aggression, and asked for a sympathetic judgment on their action. What the verdict was, history records.

To-day it is our turn to appeal to the people of America. We seek no more fitting prelude to that appeal than the terms in which your forefathers greeted ours :

" We are desirous of possessing the good opinion of the virtuous and humane. We are peculiarly desirous of furnishing you with the true state of our motives and objects, the better to enable you to judge of our conduct with accuracy, and determine the merits of the controversy with impartiality and precision."

If the Irish race had been conscriptable by England in the war against the United Colonies is it certain that your Republic would to-day flourish in the enjoyment of its noble Constitution ?

Since then the Irish Parliament has been destroyed, by methods described by the greatest of British statesmen as those of " blackguardism and baseness." Ireland, deprived of its protection and overborne by more than six to one in the British Lower House, and by more than a hundred to one in the Upper House, is summoned by England to submit to a hitherto-unheard-of decree against her liberties.

In the fourth year of a war ostensibly begun for the defence of small nations, a law conscribing the manhood of Ireland has been passed, in defiance of the wishes of our people. The British Parlia-

ment, which enacted it, had long outrun its course, being in the eighth year of an existence constitutionally limited to five. To warrant the coercive statute, no recourse was had to the electorate of Britain, much less to that of Ireland. Yet the measure was forced through within a week, despite the votes of Irish representatives, and under a system of closure never applied to the debates which established conscription for Great Britain on a milder basis.

To repel the calumnies invented to becloud our action, we venture to address the successors of the belligerents who once appealed to Ireland. The feelings which inspire America deeply concern our race ; so, in the forefront of our remonstrance, we feel bound to set forth that this Conscription Act involves for Irishmen questions far larger than any affecting mere internal politics. They raise a sovereign principle between a nation that has never abandoned her independent rights, and an adjacent nation that has persistently sought to strangle them.

Were Ireland to surrender that principle, she must submit to a usurped power, condone the fraudulent prostration of her Parliament in 1800, and abandon all claim to distinct nationality. Deep-seated and far-reaching are the problems remorselessly aroused by the unthinking and violent courses taken at Westminster.

Thus the sudden and unlooked-for departure of British politicians from their past military procedure towards this island provokes acutely the fundamental issue of Self-determination. That issue will decide whether our whole economic, social, and political life must lie at the uncontrolled disposition of another race whose title to legislate for us rests on force and fraud alone.

Ireland is a nation more ancient than England, and is one of the oldest in Christendom. Its geographical boundaries are clearly defined. It cherishes its own traditions, history, language, music, and culture. It throbs with a national consciousness sharpened not only by religious persecution, but by the violation of its territorial, juristic, and legislative rights. The authority of which its invaders boasted rests solely on an alleged Papal Bull. The symbols of attempted conquest are roofless castles, ruined abbeys, and confiscated cathedrals.

The title of King of Ireland was first conferred on the English monarch by a statute of the Parliament held in Ireland in 1542, when only four of our counties lay under English sway. That title originated in no English enactment. Neither did the Irish Parliament so originate. Every military aid granted by that Parliament to English kings was purely voluntary. Even when the Penal Code denied representation to the majority of the Irish population, military service was never enforced against them.

For generations England claimed control over both legislative and judicial functions in Ireland, but in 1783 these pretensions were altogether renounced, and the sovereignty of the Irish Legislature was solemnly recognised. A memorable British statute declared it—

" Established and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable."

For this, the spirit evoked by the successful revolt of the United States of America is to be thanked, and Ireland won no mean return for the sympathy invited by your Congress. Yet scarcely had George III signified his Royal Assent to that " scrap of paper," when his Ministers began to debauch the Irish Parliament. No Catholic had, for over a century, been allowed to sit within its walls; and only a handful of the population enjoyed the franchise. In 1800, by shameless bribery, a majority of corrupt Colonists was procured to embrace the London subjugation and vote away the existence of their Legislature for pensions, pelf, and titles.

The authors of the Act of Union, however, sought to soften its shackles by limiting the future jurisdiction of the British Parliament. Imposed on " a reluctant and protesting nation," it was tempered by articles guaranteeing Ireland against the coarser and more obvious forms of injustice. To guard against undue taxation, " exemptions and abatements " were stipulated for; but the " predominant partner " has long since dishonoured that part of the contract, and the weaker side has no power to enforce it. No military burdens were provided for, although Britain framed the terms of the treaty to her own liking. That an obligation to yield enforced service was thereby undertaken has never hitherto been asserted. We therefore cannot neglect to support this protest by citing a main proviso of the Treaty of Union. Before the destruction of the Irish Parliament no standing army or navy was raised, nor was any contribution made, except by way of gift, to the British Army or Navy. No Irish law for the levying of drafts existed; and such a proposal was deemed unconstitutional. Hence the 8th Article of the Treaty provides that—

" All laws in force at the time of the Union shall remain as now by law established, subject only to such alterations and regulations from time to time as circumstances may appear to the Parliament of the United Kingdom to require."

Where there was no law establishing military service for Ireland, what " alteration or regulation " respecting such a law can legally bind? Can an enactment such as Conscription, affecting the legal and moral rights of an entire people, be described as an " alteration " or " regulation " springing from a pre-existing law? Is the Treaty to be construed as Britain pleases, and always to the prejudice of the weaker side?

British military statecraft has hitherto rigidly held by a separate tradition for Ireland. The Territorial military system, created in 1907 for Great Britain, was not set up in Ireland. The Irish Militia was then actually disbanded, and the War Office insisted that no

Territorial force to replace it should be embodied. Stranger still, the Volunteer Acts (Naval or Military) from 1804 to 1900 (some twenty in all) were never extended to Ireland. In 1880, when a Conservative House of Commons agreed to tolerate volunteering, the measure was thrown out by the House of Lords on the plea that Irishmen must not be allowed to learn the use of arms.

For, despite the Bill of Rights, the privilege of free citizens to bear arms in self-defence has been refused to us. The Constitution of America affirms that right as appertaining to the common people, but the men of Ireland are forbidden to bear arms in their own defence. Where, then, lies the basis of the claim that they can be forced to take them up for the defence of others?

It will suffice to present such considerations in outline without disinterring the details of the past misgovernment of our country. Mr. Gladstone avowed that these were marked by "every horror and every shame that could disgrace the relations between a strong country and a weak one." After an orgy of Martial Law the Scottish General, Abercromby, Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, wrote: "Every crime, every cruelty that could be committed by Cossacks or Calmucks has been transacted here. . . . The abuses of all kinds I found can scarcely be believed or enumerated." Lord Holland recalls that many people "were sold at so much a head to the Prussians."

We shall, therefore, pass by the story of the destruction of our manufactures, of artificial famines, of the fomentation of uprisings, of a hundred Coercion Acts, culminating in the perpetual "Act of Repression" obtained by forgery, which graced Queen Victoria's Jubilee Year in 1887. In our island the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the repression of free speech, gibbetings, shootings, and bayonetings, are commonplace events. The effects of forced emigration and famine American generosity has softened; and we do not seek a verdict on the general merits of a system which enjoys the commendation of no foreigner except Albert, Prince Consort, who declared that the Irish "were no more worthy of sympathy than the Poles."

It is known to you how our population shrank to its present fallen state. Grants of money for emigration, "especially of families," were provided even by the Land Act of 1881. Previous Poor Law Acts had stimulated this "remedy." So late as 1891 a "Congested District" Board was empowered to "aid emigration," although millions of Irishmen had in the nineteenth century been evicted from their homes or driven abroad.

Seventy years ago our population stood at 8,000,000, and, in the normal ratio of increase, it should to-day amount to 16,000,000. Instead, it has dwindled to 4,500,000; and it is from this residuum that our manhood between the ages of eighteen and fifty-one is to be delivered up in such measure as the strategists of the English War Cabinet may demand.

To-day, as in the days of George Washington, nearly half the American forces have been furnished from the descendants of our banished race. If England could not, during your Revolution, regard that enrolment with satisfaction, might she not set something now to Ireland's credit from the racial composition of your Army or Navy ? No other small nation has been so bereft by law of her children, but in vain for Ireland has the bread of exile been thrown upon the waters.

Yet, while Self-determination is refused, we are required by law to bleed to " make the world safe for democracy "—in every country except our own. Surely this cannot be the meaning of America's message to mankind glowing from the pen of her illustrious President ?

In the 750 years during which the stranger sway has blighted Ireland her people have never had occasion to welcome an unselfish or generous deed at the hands of their rulers. Every so-called " concession " was but the loosening of a fetter. Every benefit sprang from a manipulation of our own money by a foreign Treasury denying us an honest audit of accounts. None was yielded as an act of grace. All were the offspring of constraint, tumult, or political necessity. Reason and arguments fell on deaf ears. To England the Union has brought enhanced wealth, population, power, and importance ; to Ireland increased taxation, stunted industries, swollen emigration, and callous officialism.

Possessing in this land neither moral nor intellectual pre-eminence, nor any prestige derived from past merit or present esteem, the British Executive claims to restrain our liberties, control our fortunes, and exercise over our people the power of life and death. To obstruct the recent Home Rule Bill it allowed its favourites to defy its Parliament without punishment, to import arms from suspect regions with impunity, to threaten " to break every law " to effectuate their designs to infect the Army with mutiny and set up a rival Executive backed by military array to enforce the rule of a caste against the vast majority of the people. The highest offices of State became the guerdon of the organisers of rebellion, boastful of aid from Germany. To-day they are pillars of the Constitution, and the chief instrument of law. The only laurels lacking to the leaders of the Mutineers are those transplanted from the field of battle !

Are we to fight to maintain a system so repugnant, and must Irishmen be content to remain slaves themselves after freedom for distant lands has been purchased by their blood ?

Heretofore in every clime, whenever the weak called for a defender, wherever the flag of liberty was unfurled, that blood freely flowed. Profiting by Irish sympathy with righteous causes Britain, at the outbreak of war, attracted to her armies tens of thousands of our youth ere even the Western Hemisphere had awakened to the wail of " small nations."

Irishmen, in their chivalrous eagerness, laid themselves open to

the reproach from some of their brethren of forgetting the woes of their own land, which had suffered from its rulers, at one time or another, almost every inhumanity for which Germany is impeached. It was hard to bear the taunt that the army they were joining was that which held Ireland in subjection ; but fresh bitterness has been added to such reproaches by what has since taken place.

Nevertheless, in the face of persistent discouragements, Irish chivalry remained ardent and aflame in the first years of the war. Tens of thousands of the children of the Gael have perished in the conflict. Their bones bleach upon the soil of Flanders or moulder beneath the waves of Suvla Bay. The slopes of Gallipoli, the sands of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Judæa afford them sepulture. Mons and Ypres provide their monuments. Wherever the battle-line extends from the English Channel to the Persian Gulf their ghostly voices whisper a response to the roll-call of the guardian-spirits of Liberty. What is their reward ?

The spot on earth they loved best, and the land to which they owed their first duty, and which they hoped their sacrifices might help to freedom, lies unredeemed under an age-long thraldom. So, too, would it for ever lie, were every man and every youth within the shores of Ireland to immolate himself in England's service, unless the clamour of a dominant caste be rebuked and stilled.

Yet proof after proof accumulates that British Cabinets continue to be towards our country as conscienceless as ever. They deceive frankly nations throughout the world as to their Irish policy, while withholding from us even the Act of Home Rule which in 1914 was placed on the Statute-book. The recent " Convention," which they composed to initiate reform, was brought to confusion by a letter from the Prime Minister diminishing his original engagements.

Such insincere manœuvres have left an indelible sense of wrong rankling in the hearts of Ireland.

Capitulations are observed with French Canadians, with the Maltese, with the Hindoos, with the Mohammedan Arabs, or the African Boers ; but never has the word of England, in any capital case, been kept towards the " sister " island.

The Parliaments of Australia and of South Africa—both of which (unlike our ancient Legislature) were founded by British enactments —refused to adopt conscription. This was well known when the law against Ireland was resolved on. For opposing the application of that law to Irishmen, and while this appeal to you, sir, was being penned, members of our Conference have been arrested and deported without trial. It was even sought to poison the wells of American sympathy by levelling against them and others an allegation which its authors have failed to submit to the investigation of any tribunal.

To overlay malpractice by imputing to its victims perverse or criminal conduct is the stale but never-failing device of tyranny.

A claim has also been put forward by the British Foreign Office

to prevent you, Mr. President, as the head of a great allied Republic, from acquiring first-hand information of the reasons why Ireland has rejected, and will resist, conscription except in so far as the Military Governor of Ireland, Field-Marshal Lord French, may be pleased to allow you to peruse his version of our opinions.

America's present conflict with Germany obstructs no argument that we advance. "Liberty and ordered peace" we, too, strive for; and confidently do we look to you, sir, and to America—whose freedom Irishmen risked something to establish—to lend ear and weight to the prayer that another unprovoked wrong against the defenceless may not stain this sorry century.

We know that America entered the war because her rights as a neutral, in respect of ocean navigation, were interfered with, and only then. Yet America in her strength had a guarantee that in victory she would not be cheated of that for which she joined in the struggle. Ireland, having no such strength, has no such guarantee; and experience has taught us that justice (much less gratitude) is not to be wrung from a hostile Government. What Ireland is to give, a free Ireland must determine.

We are sadly aware, from recent proclamations and deportations, of the efforts of British authorities to inflame prejudice against our country. We therefore crave allowance briefly to notice the insinuation that the Irish coasts, with native connivance, could be made a base for the destruction of American shipping.

An official statement asserts that:

"An important feature in every plan was the establishment of submarine bases in Ireland to menace the shipping of all nations."

On this it is enough to say that every creek, inlet, or estuary that indents our shores, and every harbour, mole, or jetty is watchfully patrolled by British authority. Moreover, Irish vessels, with their cargoes, crews, and passengers, have suffered in this war proportionately to those of Britain.

Another State Paper palliates the deportations by blazoning the descent of a solitary invader upon a remote island on the 12th of April, heralded by mysterious warnings from the Admiralty to the Irish Command. No discussion is permitted of the tryst of this British soldier with the local coast-guards, of his speedy bent towards a police barrack, and his subsequent confidences with the London authorities.

Only one instance exists in history of a project to profane our coasts by making them a base to launch attacks on international shipping. That plot was framed, not by native wickedness, but by an English Viceroy, and the proofs are piled up under his hand in British State Papers.

For huge bribes were proffered by Lord Falkland, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, to both the Royal Secretary and the Prince of Wales,

to obtain consent for the use of Irish harbours to convenience Turkish and Algerine pirates in raiding sea-going commerce. The plot is old, but the plea of " increasing his Majesty's revenues " by which it was commended is everlasting. Nor will age lessen its significance for the citizens of that Republic which, amidst the tremors and greed of European diplomacy, extirpated the traffic of Algerine corsairs ninety years ago. British experts cherish Lord Falkland's fame as the sire of their most knightly cavalier, and in their eyes its lustre shines undimmed, though his Excellency, foiled of marine booty, enriched himself by seizing the lands of his untried prisoners in Dublin Castle.

Moving are other retrospects evoked by the present outbreak of malignity against our nation. The slanders of the hour recall those let loose to cloak previous deportations in days of panic less ignoble. Then it was the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Oliver Plunkett, who was dragged to London and arraigned for high treason. Poignant memories quicken at every incident which accompanied his degradation before the Lord Chief Justice of England. A troop of witnesses was suborned to swear that his Grace " endeavoured and compassed the King's death," sought to " levy war in Ireland and introduce a foreign Power," and conspired " to take a view of all the several ports and places in Ireland where it would be convenient to land from France." An open trial, indeed, was not denied him ; but with hasty rites he was branded a base and false traitor and doomed to be hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn. That desperate felon, after prolonged investigation by the Holy See, has lately been declared a martyr worthy of universal veneration.

The fathers of the American Revolution were likewise pursued in turn by the venom of Governments. Could they have been snatched from their homes and haled to London, what fate would have befallen them? There your noblest patriots might also have perished amidst scenes of shame, and their effigies would now bedeck a British chamber of horrors. Nor would death itself have shielded their reputations from hatchments of dishonour. For the greatest of Englishmen reviled even the sacred name of Joan of Arc, the stainless Maid of France, to belittle a fallen foe and spice a ribald stage-play.

It is hardly thirty years since every Irish leader was made the victim of a special Statute of Proscription, and was cited to answer vague charges before London judges. During 1888 and 1889 a malignant and unprecedented inquisition was maintained to vilify them, backed by all the resources of British power. No war then raged to breed alarms, yet no weapon that perjury or forgery could fashion was left unemployed to destroy the characters of more than eighty National representatives—some of whom survive to join in this Address. That plot came to an end amidst the confusion of their persecutors, but fresh accusations may be daily contrived and buttressed by the chicanery of State.

In every generation the Irish nation is challenged to plead to a new indictment, and to the present summons answer is made before no narrow forum but to the tribunal of the world. So answering, we commit our cause, as did America, to "the virtuous and humane," and also more humbly to the providence of God.

Well assured are we that you, Mr. President, whose exhortations have inspired the Small Nations of the world with fortitude to defend to the last their liberties against oppressors, will not be found among those who would condemn Ireland for a determination which is irrevocable to continue steadfastly in the course mapped out for her, no matter what the odds, by an unexampled unity of National judgment and National right.

Given at the Mansion House, Dublin, this 11th day of June, 1918.

LAURENCE O'NEILL, Lord Mayor of Dublin,
Chairman of a Conference of representative
Irishmen whose names stand hereunder.

JOSEPH DEVLIN,
JOHN DILLON,
MICHAEL JOHNSON,
WILLIAM O'BRIEN (Lab.),
T. M. HEALY,
WILLIAM O'BRIEN,

THOMAS KELLY,
JOHN MACNEILL,
} Acting in the place of E. DE VALERA and A. GRIFFITH, deported 18th of May, 1918, to separate prisons in England, without trial or accusation—communication with whom has been cut off.

APPENDIX B

UNIONIST LETTER TO PRESIDENT WILSON

CITY HALL, BELFAST,
August 1st, 1918.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SIR,

A manifesto signed by the leader of the Irish Nationalist Party and certain other Irish gentlemen has been widely circulated in the United Kingdom, in the form of a letter purporting to have been addressed to your Excellency.[1]

Its purpose appears to be to offer an explanation of, and an excuse for, the conduct of the Nationalist Party in obstructing the extension to Ireland of compulsory military service, which the rest of the United Kingdom has felt compelled to adopt as the necessary means of defeating the German design to dominate the world. At a time when all the free democracies of the world have, with whatever reluctance, accepted the burden of conscription as the only alternative to the destruction of free institutions and of international justice, it is easily intelligible that those who maintain Ireland's right to solitary and privileged exemption from the same obligation should betray their consciousness that an apologia is required to enable them to escape condemnation at the bar of civilised, and especially of American, opinion. But, inasmuch as the document referred to would give to anyone not intimately familiar with British domestic affairs the impression that it represents the unanimous opinion of Irishmen, it is important that your Excellency and the American people should be assured that this is very far from being the case.

There is in Ireland a minority, whom we claim to represent, comprising one-fourth to one-third of the total population of the island, located mainly, but not exclusively, in the province of Ulster, who dissent emphatically from the views of Mr. Dillon and his associates. This minority, through their representatives in Parliament, have maintained throughout the present war that the same obligations should in all respects be borne by Ireland as by Great Britain, and it has caused them as Irishmen a keen sense of shame that their country has not submitted to this equality of sacrifice.

Your Excellency does not need to be informed that this question has become entangled in the ancient controversy concerning the

[1] See Appendix A.

constitutional status of Ireland in the United Kingdom. This is, indeed, sufficiently clear from the terms of the Nationalist manifesto addressed to you, every paragraph of which is coloured by allusion to bygone history and threadbare political disputes.

It is not our intention to traverse the same ground. There is in the manifesto almost no assertion with regard to past events which is not either a distortion or a misinterpretation of historical fact. But we consider that this is not the moment for discussing the faults and follies of the past, still less for rehearsing ancient grievances, whether well or ill founded, in language of extravagant rhetoric. At a time when the very existence of civilisation hangs in the balance, all smaller issues, whatever their merits or however they may affect our internal political problems, should in our judgment have remained in abeyance, while the parties interested in their solution should have joined in whole-hearted co-operation against the common enemy.

There is, however, one matter to which reference must be made, in order to make clear the position of the Irish minority whom we represent. The Nationalist Party have based their claim to American sympathy on the historic appeal addressed to Irishmen by the British colonists who fought for independence in America a hundred and fifty years ago. By no Irishmen was that appeal received with a more lively sympathy than by the Protestants of Ulster, the ancestors of those for whom we speak to-day—a fact that was not surprising in view of the circumstance that more than one-sixth part of the entire colonial population in America at the time of the Declaration of Independence consisted of emigrants from Ulster.

The Ulstermen of to-day, forming as they do the chief industrial community in Ireland, are as devoted adherents to the cause of democratic freedom as were their forefathers in the eighteenth century. But the experience of a century of social and economic progress under the legislative Union with Great Britain has convinced them that under no other system of government could more complete liberty be enjoyed by the Irish people. This, however, is not the occasion for a reasoned defence of " Unionist " policy. Our sole purpose in referring to the matter is to show, whatever be the merits of the dispute, that a very substantial volume of Irish opinion is warmly attached to the existing Constitution of the United Kingdom, and regards as wholly unwarranted the theory that our political status affords any sort of parallel to that of the " small nations " oppressed by alien rule, for whose emancipation the Allied democracies are fighting in this war.

The Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament throws a significant sidelight on this prevalent fiction. Whereas England is only represented by one member for every 75,000 of population, and Scotland by one for every 65,000, Ireland has a member for every 42,000 of her people. With a population below that of Scotland,

Ireland has 31 more members in the House of Commons, and 39 more than she could claim on a basis of representation strictly proportionate to population in the United Kingdom.

Speaking in Dublin on the 1st of July, 1915, the late Mr. John Redmond gave the following description of the present condition of Ireland, which offers a striking contrast to the extravagant declamation that represents that country as downtrodden by a harsh and unsympathetic system of government:

"To-day," he said, "the people, broadly speaking, own the soil. To-day the labourers live in decent habitations. To-day there is absolute freedom in local government and local taxation of the country. To-day we have the widest parliamentary and municipal franchise. The congested districts, the scene of some of the most awful horrors of the old famine days, have been transformed. The farms have been enlarged, decent dwellings have been provided, and a new spirit of hope and independence is to-day among the people. In towns legislation has been passed facilitating the housing of the working classes—a piece of legislation far in advance of anything obtained for the town tenants of England. We have a system of old-age pensions in Ireland whereby every old man and woman over seventy is safe from the workhouse and free to spend their last days in comparative comfort."

Such are the conditions which, in the eyes of Nationalist politicians, constitute a tyranny so intolerable as to justify Ireland in repudiating her fair share in the burden of war against the enemies of civilisation.

The appeal which the Nationalists make to the principle of "self-determination" strikes Ulster Protestants as singularly inappropriate. Mr. Dillon and his co-signatories have been careful not to inform your Excellency that it was their own opposition that prevented the question of Irish Government being settled in accordance with that principle in 1916. The British Government were prepared at that time to bring the Home Rule Act of 1914 into immediate operation, if the Nationalists had consented to exclude from its scope the distinctively Protestant population of the North, who desired to adhere to the Union. This compromise was rejected by the Nationalist leaders, whose policy was thus shown to be one of "self-determination" for themselves, combined with coercive domination over us.

It is because the British Government, while prepared to concede the principle of self-determination impartially to both divisions in Ireland, has declined to drive us forcibly into such subjection that the Nationalist Party conceive themselves entitled to resist the law of conscription. And the method by which this resistance has been made effective is, in our view, not less deplorable than the spirit that dictated it. The most active opponents of conscription in Ireland are men who have been twice detected during the war in treasonable traffic with the enemy, and their most powerful support has been that of ecclesiastics, who have not scrupled to employ

weapons of spiritual terrorism which have elsewhere in the civilised world fallen out of political use since the Middle Ages.

The claim of these men, in league with Germany on the one hand, and with the forces of clericalism on the other, to resist a law passed by Parliament as necessary for national defence is, moreover, inconsistent with any political status short of independent sovereignty—a status which could only be attained by Ireland by an act of secession from the United Kingdom, such as the American Union averted only by resort to civil war. In every Federal or other Constitution embracing subordinate legislatures the raising and control of military forces are matters reserved for the supreme legislative authority alone, and they are so reserved for the Imperial Parliament of the United Kingdom in the Home Rule Act of 1914, the "withholding" of which during the war is complained of by the Nationalists who have addressed your Excellency. The contention of these gentlemen that until the internal government of Ireland is changed in accordance with their demands, Ireland is justified in resisting the law of Conscription, is one that finds support in no intelligible theory of political science.

To us as Irishmen—convinced as we are of the righteousness of the cause for which we are fighting, and resolved that no sacrifice can be too great to "make the world safe for democracy"—it is a matter of poignant regret that the conduct of the Nationalist leaders in refusing to lay aside matters of domestic dispute, in order to put forth the whole strength of the country against Germany should have cast a stain on the good name of Ireland. We have done everything in our power to dissociate ourselves from their action, and we disclaim responsibility for it at the bar of posterity and history.

EDWARD CARSON.
JAMES JOHNSTON, Lord Mayor of Belfast.
H. M. POLLOCK, President Belfast Chamber of Commerce.
R. N. ANDERSON, Mayor of Londonderry, and President Londonderry Chamber of Commerce.
JOHN M. ANDREWS, Chairman Ulster Unionist Labour Association.
JAMES A. TURKINGTON, Vice-Chairman Ulster Unionist Labour Association, and Secretary Power-loom and Allied Trades Friendly Society, and ex-Secretary Power-loom Tenters' Trade Union of Ireland.
THOMPSON DONALD, Hon. Secretary Ulster Unionist Labour Association, and ex-District Secretary Shipwrights' Association.
HENRY FLEMING, Hon. Secretary Ulster Unionist Labour Association, Member of Boilermakers' Iron and Steel Shipbuilders' Society.

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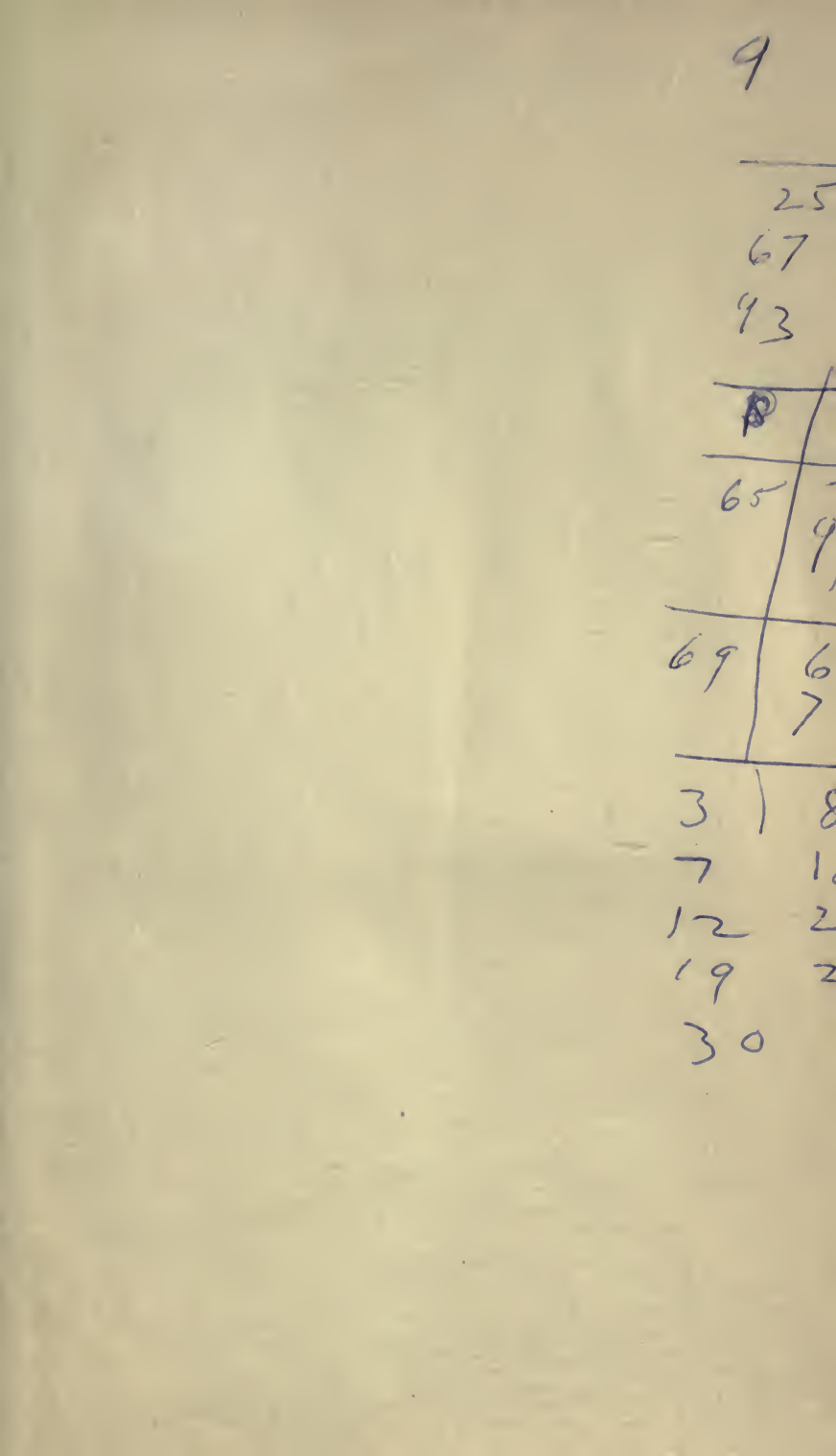
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